

A dynamic manga-style illustration featuring three characters. In the foreground, a young man with dark hair and a determined expression is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark, ornate suit with red and black patterns. He is surrounded by bright blue and red energy or light effects. Behind him, two young women are visible. The woman on the left has long brown hair and is wearing a white and black outfit. The woman on the right has short blue hair and is wearing a blue and black outfit. The background is a bright, hazy blue with some light effects.

I Got a
CHEAT SKILL
in **ANOTHER**
WORLD and Became
UNRIVALED
in the **REAL**
WORLD,
Too

3

Miku

Illustration by
Rein
Kuwashima



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The background of the entire page is a detailed anime-style illustration of a young woman with long, flowing red hair and red eyes. She is wearing a white short-sleeved shirt and dark blue shorts. She is shown from the waist up, leaning forward with her head turned back to look over her shoulder at the viewer. Her expression is slightly embarrassed or shy. The background is a soft, glowing pink and purple with some sparkling effects.

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**“P-please don’t look...
It’s embarrassing...”**

Character:

Kaede Kazama

A classmate of Yuuya’s at Ousei Academy. She has a cheerful and friendly personality. Her huge boobs often get groped by another girl in her grade, Rin.

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“Th-this
kiss... It’s for
everything
you’ve done
for me until
now and...
uhhh...my
declaration
of war!”

Character:

Luna

She trained with
Yuuya in the Weald,
but turned out
to be a skilled
assassin known as
the Headhunter.
Her mission to kill
Lexia has been
impeded by Yuuya...



Character:

Kaori Houjou

She's the daughter of Ousei Academy's principal, and she has feelings for Yuuya. Her beauty is renowned throughout the academy, but she's terrible at sports.

"Sigh... To think that I'd end up evolving..."

"W-would you like to walk part of the way home together?!"

Character:

Yuuya Tenjou

After opening a door to another world where he acquired incredible physical capabilities, and inherited the ultimate magic from the sage, Yuuya is overpowered in every facet of his life.

His Excellence Spans Two Worlds

"What you just said... Do you have any idea how amazing it is?!"

Character:

Lexia von Arselia

The first princess of the Kingdom of Arselia, she proposes to Yuuya after he saves her life and has invited him to the capital for an audience with her father.



Master and Apprentice to a God

"I'm gonna give it
all I got!"

"Good. That's it."

Character:

The Rabbit

A Divine Beast that Yuuya met in the wild who boasts unrivaled combat abilities. He sees a great talent in Yuuya and makes him his apprentice.

"Oink."

"Woof."

Character:

Akatsuki

A young, red Meng Hui that Yuuya inadvertently tames. The little pig has the Holy Sanctuary skill...

Character:

Night

A black Fenrir pup that became Yuuya's companion. He is Yuuya's battle buddy in fights against monsters.

"Now, to put your training
into practice."

"Huh?!"

It takes me a while to process
what the rabbit is suggesting.
I-into practice? Does...that mean...?
Feeling a strange sense of
foreboding, I ask the rabbit a
question.

"And...I'll be fighting against...?"

"Me, of course."

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Illustration by
Rein Kuwashima


New York



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ISEKAI DE CHEAT SKILL WO TE NI SHITA ORE WA, GENJITSU SEKAI WOMO MUSO SURU, Volume 3 ~LEVEL UP WA JINSEI WO KAETA~

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First published in Japan in 2019 by KADOKAWA CORPORATION, Tokyo.

English translation rights arranged with KADOKAWA CORPORATION, Tokyo through TUTTLE-MORI AGENCY, INC., Tokyo.

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New York, NY 10001

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First Yen On Edition: August 2023
Edited by Yen On Editorial: Leilah Labossiere
Designed by Yen Press Design: Andy Swist

Yen On is an imprint of Yen Press, LLC.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Miku (Manga author), author. | Kuwashima, Rein, illustrator. | Akimoto, Noboru, translator. | Radford, Carley, translator.

Title: I got a cheat skill in another world and became unrivaled in the real world, too / Miku, Rein Kuwashima ; translation by Noboru Akimoto; translation by Carley Radford.

Other titles: Isekai de cheat skill wo tenishita ore wa, genjitsu sekai wo mo musousuru. English

Description: First Yen On edition. | New York, NY : Yen On, 2022.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021062848 | ISBN 9781975333935 (v. 1 ; trade paperback) | ISBN 9781975333959 (v. 2 ; trade paperback) | ISBN 9781975333973 (v. 3 ; trade paperback) | ISBN 9781975333997 (v. 4 ; trade paperback) | ISBN 9781975334017 (v. 5 ; trade paperback) | ISBN 9781975334031 (v. 6 ; trade paperback)

Subjects: LCGFT: Fantasy fiction. | Light novels.

Classification: LCC PL873.L44 I7413 2022 | DDC 895.63/6—dc23/eng/20220128

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2021062848>

ISBNs: 978-1-9753-3397-3 (paperback)

978-1-9753-3398-0 (ebook)

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Prologue

Just as I've started enjoying my life on Earth with my new family member, Night, I'm supposed to head to the royal palace in the other world to keep my promise to Lexia. However, our journey was interrupted by a mysterious assailant.

When unmasked, our attacker turned out to be someone I know, someone whom I've trained with—even if it was for a short time—in the Weald. A girl named Luna.

I still don't know what made Luna target Lexia. What I do know, though, is that now that she's attacked the first princess, she'll have to face serious consequences.

After I fought and neutralized Luna, Lexia found out that I didn't intend to hand over the assassin right away and that I was going to take the attacker back to my place until her injuries healed... So Lexia ended up following me all the way home.

Now that we've shaken off Owen and the other soldiers on our tail, there's no going back anymore, and I'm left with no choice but to let Lexia look after Luna at my house.

"Okay, Sir Yuuya. I think I get your connection to this girl. But what was that magic you used to transport us here so quickly?"

"Huh?"

After sitting at Luna's bedside for a few moments, Lexia looks up at me with a serious expression on her face and asks for more information.

"It's hard to explain... It's, like, magic that I created to be able to teleport."

"Magic that you invented?"

"Y-yeah..."

Huh? Did I say something weird?

"S-Sir Yuuya...what you just said... Do you have any idea how amazing it is?! Teleportation magic only exists in legend!"

"A-are you sure?"

"Of course I am! This kind of magic is unprecedented! It turns

everything we know on its head!"

Lexia draws near me, looking grim, yet she's unable to completely quell her excitement.

"If we had the sort of magic you have, we could prevent suffering inflicted by bandits and monsters and we could respond to emergencies instantly. It's the kind of magic...that has only ever existed in fantasy. That is, until you cast it, Sir Yuuya."

"I-it's that rare...?"

I created it only because I thought I'd need it on the school field trip. Apart from that, I assumed it would come in handy for getting around the Weald, but...I just thought it was a useful spell to have.

But...

"Look...you can't tell anyone else about this."

"Wh-why?"

"Weren't you listening? This spell changes everything... Including war."

"Wha—?!"

When I actually think about it for a second, I can understand what she's getting at.

If this power existed in my world, it could definitely be abused.

And that goes for this world, too. Why didn't I think about that first? Sometimes my naïveté scares me.

Even though I pale at the realization of how dangerous teleportation magic can be, Lexia's eyes are twinkling.

"Although I suppose the problem goes away as long as I keep my mouth shut, and there's no denying that this magic will come in super handy! Way to go, Sir Yuuya!"

"Wha—? How can you be so casual about this now?"

"It'll be fine! Just don't go around recklessly teaching it to anyone else, okay, Sir Yuuya?"

"I—I won't!"

"Good. Although I doubt anyone else would be able to use it even if you taught them."

"Huh? Why not?"

A strange expression forms on Lexia's face the moment I blurt out my question.

"Why...? Because this kind of magic is a thing of legend. The theory behind it is so complex and difficult to understand that even our best wizards probably wouldn't be able to comprehend it."

"....."

Just as I'd expect from the sage. I may be the one unconsciously using and creating magic, but it's all made possible thanks to his mana pathways. If it wasn't for those, there's no way I would be able to cast the kind of magic I imagine.

Plus, there's more to the spell than just understanding the theory. I take a photo of the place I want to teleport to and memorize it for the spell to work. Photos are a concept unique to Earth, so even if I did tell someone here how to cast the magic, that would probably prevent them from being able to use it.

"Now, how much longer are you going to pretend to be asleep?"

"Gulp."

"Huh?"

In the middle of our conversation, Lexia suddenly addresses a supposedly sleeping Luna.

As I look to the bed in surprise, Luna slowly sits up with an awkward look on her face.

"...How long have you known?"

"Since the beginning. You've been awake ever since we arrived here, haven't you?"

"Huh? What?!"

She's been awake? This whole time?

Luna grimaces as she sees me unable to hide my shock.

"I-if you knew, then...why didn't you say anything?"

"So I could speak with Sir Yuuya in peace, of course. And as for Sir Yuuya, he's a kind man, so he was just being polite and pretending not to notice while we took care of you."

"Oh..."

Huh? Is that really why Lexia didn't say that Luna was awake? I mean, Luna attacked her! Plus, I didn't even notice anything...

"Woof."

"Hee-hee. Although with Night here, I suppose we were never going to have any privacy in the first place."

"Woof!"

Night ignores my dumbfounded expression and barks adorably. Lexia gives him a gentle pat.

"In any case, don't you think it's time you explain why you attacked me?"

"...Do you really think I'll give you a straight answer?"

"Awww, and do you really think I'd give you the option to stay silent?"

"..."

H-how did it get so tense? Is this like the psychological warfare that you see in books and movies? I can't tell...

As I stand bemused by the conversation playing out in front of me, Luna eventually heaves a sigh.

"...Hmph. Even if I do talk, the fact that I attacked you won't change. Just kill me already."

"You're right. It changes nothing. Still, I want to know more about

you.”

“And what good would that do?”

“Who knows? But the fact remains that you couldn’t kill me. You lost. And since you’re the loser here, maybe you should just be good and do what the victor says!”

Lexia’s voice is laced with the authority of royalty, and Luna’s wide eyes look defeated.

And then...

“...I’m jealous of people like you.”

“What?”

Luna looks down with a sad smile.

“It’s nothing groundbreaking. Probably a story you’ve heard a million times before... Do you still want to hear it?”

“Yes.”

“Me too... I want to know more about you, too, Luna.”

It isn’t just Lexia who has an interest in Luna’s story. I know it was only for a short while, but Luna and I trained together. Yet I never got to know anything about her. Even though I wanted to.

“Sigh... You win. But like I said, it’s no big deal. I’m an orphan. Every day used to be a battle just to survive. I used to scavenge through garbage, drink dirty water, steal... Luckily it was enough to keep me going, so at least I never had to sell myself into slavery... Not that anyone would have bought me at that point. Not after sinking to the depths I’d already sunk to.”

“.....”

“I wanted to be able to defend myself, too, so I got stronger. Then one day someone found me. A master who taught me everything about the art of assassination. Somehow, my master had seen how good a thief I was and the strength I’d attained for myself. So I went to live with them, and they taught me all kinds of knowledge and skills... Pretty much all of them related to how to kill people. That was their work, after all.”

“...You’re talking about someone from the Guild of Darkness, aren’t you?”

“The Guild of Darkness?”

I cock my head at the unfamiliar name as Luna launches into an explanation.

“The Guild of Darkness is...well, a collection of criminals, to put it bluntly. It’s full of thieves, con artists, drug dealers, assassins... It’s the kind of place that never cherry-picks the services it provides; it’ll take requests to commit all kinds of crimes.”

“...They’re bad guys all right, but that’s almost putting them into too tidy a box. They’re very much in bed with some of the upper classes. I’m sure one of those relationships is why they came after

me.”

Upper-class society sounds so shady! There’s no way I could deal with that!

I already got the impression from studying its history that this world is pretty grim, but to hear it from the mouth of a princess makes it real.

“...It’s as the princess says. I was a part of the Guild of Darkness, just like my master was... But then, one day, my master broke the rules. And I was chosen to take care of it. I was conflicted...about killing the person who raised me, but when push came to shove, he looked so peaceful as he passed. Probably because he died knowing that I would make it in that dark world. Afterward, I inherited his business and decided that I’d continue to live within the darkness. As time went by and I did more jobs, some people even came to know me by names like the Headhunter.”

“Th-the Headhunter?! Even I know the name of such a renowned assassin! So that’s you?!”

I’m not following the conversation very well, but it sounds like Luna was definitely a somebody in that guild.

“...Hey, Night. Did you know about this?”

“Woof?”

“It seems like you might have known something was up...”

Maybe Night didn’t know specifically that Luna was a first-class assassin, but he at least seemed wary of her from the very start. Maybe he could sense that something was off. Attaboy, you cutie!

“At any rate, the princess is right to suspect something. I did come here to kill you at the request of a nobleman...and here we are,” Luna concludes, seemingly mocking herself.

But after that, she turns to Lexia with an expression of resignation.

“There, I’ve told you everything. Do as you please, Princess.”

“As she pleases...?”

“Yuuya, you understand, don’t you? I attacked a princess. When you got in my way, that sealed my fate. In the Guild of Darkness, failure means death. Now that I’m missing, they’re probably dispatching assassins as we speak to come and silence me.”

“What the—?!”

...I understand what she’s saying. She attacked Princess Lexia. That’s something that can’t be overlooked.

Yet...I can’t accept that so easily.

Luna looks at me before shooting me a wry smile.

“Come on, Yuuya. Are you that worried about me? All we did was train together, right? Nothing more, nothing less. There’s no need to be so sad—”

“Yes, there is!”

“Huh?!”

I can feel myself getting upset at Luna, who looks like she’s already accepted her fate.

“Why would you say something like that? I had so much fun training together, Luna. I think of us as friends!”

Even though I’ve been too embarrassed to say it, ever since I trained with Luna, I naturally came to see her as a valued friend.

When we trained together, we entrusted each other with our lives and even laughed and joked around.

It wasn’t like when I’m with Lexia or Owen... It was like being back on Earth with Ryou and the others. She was the first friend I made in this world who was my equal.

“...Woof. Woof.”

“...Night?”

Night jumps up onto the bed, gently approaches Luna, and licks her cheek.

I guess Night feels the same way, huh? He may have been wary of her at the beginning, but I’m sure he grew fond of Luna, too.

“Hey, Luna. Do you really think of Night and I as just a couple of training partners?”

“...” Luna doesn’t answer at first. “...Yuuya, it doesn’t matter what you say. The future has been decided. That’s why—”

“Hey, don’t forget about me! I’m here, too!”

““Huh?””

Lexia suddenly cuts into the conversation and pouts.

I’m totally thrown by Lexia’s almost comical contribution to what had become quite the grave conversation.

“You could at least ask my permission before flirting with Sir Yuuya. He’s mine!”

“What? Is that how you’re interpreting this conversation?”

Weren’t we speaking more seriously?!

It looks like Luna and I may have felt that way, but Lexia certainly didn’t.

“It’s not fair! Sir Yuuya declared you to be friends! Yet he still speaks so formally when he’s talking to me!”

“L-look...I’m sorry. It’s just that you’re royalty, and...”

“It’s fine! I *know* that one day you’ll drop that behavior around me!”

“Ever the optimist.”

Lexia is in her own world, and before long, I found myself sucked in, too.

Luna snorts a laugh and asks Lexia a question.

“Is that how you really construed my and Yuuya’s conversation? I’m almost sorry to disappoint you, but even if that’s what it sounded like, as soon as I failed to kill you, I was condemned to death. You don’t

have to worry about me anymore. You can have him.”

“But why are you talking as if your death is already a certainty?”

“Huh?”

It’s not just Luna—I’m confused, too.

“I-isn’t it obvious...? I attacked you! A member of the royal family! The punishment *has* to be death!”

“That may be true, but the only people who know that you attacked me are Yuuya and myself. Owen never saw your face.”

“...Are you saying let’s all just forget about it and move on or something? Didn’t I just tell you that even if you pardon me, assassins will still—”

“No. What I’m saying is, I want you to serve me.”

“.....What?”

For the umpteenth time that day, a stupid-sounding noise comes out of my stupid-looking face.

“I’m saying I want to take you on as one of my guards.”

“Haven’t you been listening? I’m an assassin. A criminal. My hands are stained with the blood of countless people.”

“Look, there’s no need to worry about little things like that. You’re strong, and I want you to say that you’ll do it! We can even protect you from the Guild of Darkness. My other guard, Owen, is a very powerful warrior!”

“.....”

Luna takes in what Lexia says and remains silent.

I guess that’s royals for you. Always seeing things on a grander scale than the commoners like us.

I’m still a bit unsure about how things are going to unfold, but Night seems completely unfazed and begins to snooze by my feet. Are things really going to be okay? Is Luna going to make it out of this mess unscathed?

“Princess, the Guild of Darkness is stronger than you think. And apart from that...to have someone like me standing by your side will only stain your reputation. I’ve killed so many with these hands, I’ll never be able to completely wash the blood off them. It’s hardly as if I went around killing people honorably for my country...”

“What are you talking about? Your hands look nice and clean to me.”

“Huh?!”

Without a moment’s hesitation, Lexia takes Luna’s hands.

Then, after staring at them, she frowns.

“...Actually, they really are clean. How do you keep them so soft and smooth?”

“Well, it’s all thanks to Yuuya’s baths actua— Hey! That’s not what I—!”

“Oh, for god’s sake! Just shut up and listen!” Lexia bossily proclaims, getting up on the bed. “Besides, if you were to take Sir Yuuya away from me... Well, whatever! You work for me now! And that’s final!”

As if finally succumbing to Lexia’s energy, Luna just nods.

“Gah! Your Highness! Princess Lexiaaaa!”

While Lexia was persuading Luna over to her side, Owen desperately searched the Weald to find Lexia as quickly as possible.

“I-it’s no good, Captain! The monsters are too strong...”

“How the hell did we ever manage to make it through alive last time...?!”

“Because we weren’t here by ourselves then. We had that young man along!”

“A-at any rate, this looks impossible for us!”

The guards soon found themselves pushed back to the entrance of the Weald, losing ground to the overwhelming strength of the hordes of Goblin Elites.

“Goddammit! His Majesty has spoiled her so much that she won’t listen to anyone anymore! When we get back to the capital, I’m going to tell him exactly what I think of all this...!”

Poor Owen decided to have it out with the king when he got back, but for now, he was forced to temporarily retreat from the Weald.

CHAPTER 1

Luna and Lexia

Finally crumbling under the pressure from Lexia, Luna agrees to serve her.

“A-are you sure this is okay?”

“Now, now, no need to worry. Besides, whatever I say goes. By the way, I’ll be calling you Luna, so you can call me Lexia. I won’t hear any objections.”

“...What a high-and-mighty princess.”

I’d never be able to say this out loud, but...Owen, you’re a champ for putting up with all this for so long.

As I silently revere Owen, Lexia suddenly rounds on Luna as if she’s just remembered something.

“Oh, that’s right! Remember when I was talking about how smooth your hands are earlier? You mentioned Sir Yuuya’s name, didn’t you? What was that all about?”

“Wha—?”

I never thought that day would come back up in conversation, so I can’t help but let out a strange squeak.

Instead of me saying something, though, Luna boasts in my place.

“This is going to blow your mind! Yuuya found a bath set drop item after he defeated a monster in the Weald. If you bathe in them, not only does it take away any fatigue, but it also restores your mana and, as you can see, makes your skin look beautiful!”

“I’ve never heard of such a thing! That’s not fair. I want to try it, too! Can I, Sir Yuuya?!”

“S-sure, go ahead?!”

“Yay! Come on, Luna! Let’s take a bath together!”

“Wh-what?!”

“Come on!”

As I do what I’m told and open the Item Box to take out the baths, Lexia asks, “Won’t you join us, Sir Yuuya?”

“H-huh?!”

“Errr, Lexia?! You do realize that Yuuya is a man, don’t you? Y-you’re a princess. Have a little more decorum!”

Luna, aren’t you forgetting about that time when you got in *my* bath?

Lexia tilts her head quizzically at Luna, who seems to have conveniently forgotten what she’d done not long ago.

“It’s fine. We’re going to be married someday anyway.”

“Hold on! Hold on! You’re saying that you and Yuuya really are going to marry? Stop talking crazy!”

“I’m being serious! I’ve already decided!”

“Like I said, you’re a bossy one...”

As I look at a very bemused Luna, I once again silently venerate Owen... You really went through a lot. More to the point, didn’t I already turn down Lexia’s marriage proposal...?

“Erm...I think I’ll pass on the bath,” I say with a forced smile as I take out the bath set.

“Oh, that’s a shame! Well, Luna, let’s hurry up and enjoy the baths ourselves, then,” Lexia says before pulling Luna by the hand toward the dressing room.

“Oh wow! So these are Sir Yuuya’s baths?! The baths in the palace pale in comparison to these!”

“...You’re telling me that Yuuya’s baths are even better than the ones in your castle? Things just keep getting stranger and stranger...”

As Luna and Lexia settled into the baths, they relaxed and enjoyed the water.

“...This feels so good. Yuuya’s baths are the best...”

“It does...and it’s just like you said. I think I do feel a surge in my mana...”

Surprised by the effects of Yuuya’s baths, Lexia surrendered herself to their pleasant waters.

“—By the way, Luna. Do you have a crush on Sir Yuuya?”

“Gack?!”

Luna choked. Her face flushed, and she turned toward Lexia.

“Wh-what do you mean?! I already told you—Yuuya is...just...a friend!”

“Are you sure about that? It didn’t look that way to me. When you were speaking to him, I felt some affection there. Sir Yuuya may not have noticed, but I did.”

“...Aren’t you imagining things? Besides, it’s normal to have affection for your friends.”

“Oh, really? Then you won’t mind when Sir Yuuya and I get married, then.”

“Y-you can’t do that! Argh—!”

As soon as the words tumbled out of her mouth, Luna clapped her hands over it in a panic, but the damage was already done.

“Sigh... If you’re just friends, then it wouldn’t matter, would it? But since you don’t seem so keen on the idea...well, you don’t need me to spell it out for you, do you?”

“But...”

Luna’s mouth opened and closed for a while as she tried to retort, but eventually, she gave up with a big sigh.

“...To be honest, I’m not sure if I do have a crush on him or not. We truly were nothing more than training partners, but...before I attacked you, I guess I did think back on my time with Yuuya quite fondly. I feel like I really treasured that time we spent together.”

“I see...”

Lexia nodded slowly and went silent.

Then...

“...Okay, I’ve decided.”

“What?”

Lexia got up suddenly in the bath and pointed at Luna.

“I declare war on you!”

“W-war?”

“Yes! You may not realize it, but if you’re attracted to Sir Yuuya even a little bit, that’s love! And I love him, too!”

“L-love, huh...?”

“You can deny it all you want, but I think you do love him. What if you decide to act on it?”

“Huh?”

“Like I said! I’m going to try my hardest to make Sir Yuuya fall in love with me! And I will not lose! Whatever you say, I have no intention of giving him up! Then one day we’ll be married, and I’ll have officially won!”

“What the—?! ”

“So what are you going to do about it? Are you sure it’s okay for me to take Sir Yuuya for myself?”

Lexia stared down Luna.

Stumbling in her mental battle with Lexia, Luna imagined Yuuya and Lexia’s wedding.

Somehow, it made her want to cry. But she could still convey one thing that she felt clearly.

“...I don’t want that.”

“Huh?”

“I—I don’t want that to happen! Yuuya...is mine!”

Luna still didn’t know what to call the feeling welling up in her heart.

But one thing she was sure of was that she didn’t want Yuuya to be taken away from her.

“So I suppose that means you accept my declaration of war?”

“Gladly.”



Lexia smiled back at Luna, who now had a clear purpose, unlike when they first entered the baths.

“All right. Then from now on, you’ll be both my guard and my rival!”

“Fine. But don’t blame me later when you’re crying over your defeat.”

—With that, Luna and Lexia finally found common ground as opponents.

Once Lexia and Luna get out of the bath, I decide that I should talk to them about something.

“Erm, Lexia. Now that Luna has woken up, shouldn’t we head back to Owen and the others?”

I’d spirited away an assassin and her target back to my house without explanation.

I bet Owen and the others are really worried. And apart from that, I need to talk to him about going to the palace.

“What?! No! I want to stay here! Plus, Luna hasn’t regained her full strength yet, have you, Luna?”

“Hmm? I—”

“Silence, Luna!”

“Huh...?”

Luna is completely baffled by Lexia’s attitude. She is being pretty rude...

That said, Lexia does have a point. Even if the Herb of Complete Healing Juice heals injuries and sickness, it won’t necessarily give her all her strength back.

I consider my options, but in the end, I concede before Lexia’s fixed stare.

“...Sigh. Fine. You can stay tonight, okay? But make sure you explain things properly to Owen in the morning.”

“Of course I will! Yay for us, Luna!”

“Y-yeah.”

“Woof.”

Night barks and wags his tail as if pleased that he can stay with Luna a little longer.

“I guess I should prepare us some dinner, then, so Luna can recover as quickly as possible,” I say, turning toward my kitchen.

Lexia’s eyes suddenly light up, and she shoots her hand into the air.

“Please! Sir Yuuya!”

“Huh? Wh-what is it?”

“Let me prepare dinner!”

““Huh?””

It looks like I'm not the only one taken aback. Luna appears confused, too. But Lexia seems oblivious to our astonishment as she brims with enthusiasm.

"If I show him how well I can cook, then he's bound to fall head over heels in love with me!"

"Are you thinking out loud?"

Whatever the reason, I figure now that Lexia has set her mind to something, she won't take no for an answer, so I just let her do what she wants. It's not appropriate for someone like me to complain to a member of the royal family... Wait! But what if it's even less appropriate to have a member of the royal family cook for me...?

I don't know what to think, but since I don't really understand the customs of this world, I decide to let Lexia cook just this once.

First, I show her around the kitchen and then get the seasoning, ingredients, and cooking utensils ready.

"You can use anything here that you want."

"Ha! Well, I suppose it may not be as big as the kitchens in the palace, but it is very clean!"

The sage's house may be impressive, but there's no way it can ever compare to a castle.

After Lexia looks over the ingredients and utensils, she grabs a potato, slams it onto a cutting board, takes a knife, and—

"Hyaaaah!"

—violently swings down the knife.

"Huh? I missed. This is harder than I thought."

"U-um, Lexia? Lexiaaa?"

I try calling Lexia's name a few times as I break into a cold sweat, but she takes no notice. She just keeps waging war on the potato.

"Come on! Why can't I hit it...?! Huh?"

"Arghhh!"

The knife leaves Lexia's hand, flies right past my cheek, and sticks into the wall. Th-that was close!

"Hey, Yuuya. Are you sure it's okay to leave Lexia in charge of the cooking? We might die," Luna says with a grimace, having joined me to watch Lexia destroy the kitchen.

"I-I'll get that!" I offer to retrieve the lost utensil.

I don't think it's a good idea to let this carry on, either, so I quickly pull the knife out of the wall and try to talk Lexia down.

"L-Lexia! Lexia! How much cooking experience do you have?"

"What? This is my first time."

"Okay, I'm out."

I should have asked Lexia more about her cooking experience beforehand. My mistake!

"Lexia, I'm very sorry, but...how about you leave the cooking to me

for today?"

"What? Why?"

"Well...I want to serve dinner as soon as possible so that Luna has a chance to recover. Plus, the ingredients I want to use all come from the Weald, so it might be quicker for me to cook since I'm so used to them..."

"Y-yes, I—I am starving—I! I want to eat soon—I!"

Luna nods enthusiastically and follows my lead by inserting her own stiff comment.

"R-really? Then I suppose I don't have a choice."

Unable to ignore Luna's wooden pleas, Lexia reluctantly lets me take over.

"But I get to cook next time, okay?! I hope you're both looking forward to it!"

"Ah-ha-ha-ha..."

"...Looks like we're out of the woods for now, but she'll still get us next time. Dammit."

Don't tempt fate! As long as she learns how to cook from the palace chefs beforehand, we might be okay!

After I make an unbreakable promise with Lexia, I begin preparing our food.

I take extra care with the ingredients I use and make sure to include the King Orc meat to help Luna get her strength back.

Luna and Lexia watch me the whole time.

"Wow, Sir Yuuya! You're even a talented cook..."

"You're a strange one, Yuuya... Is there anything you can't do? Are you really just a normal human being?"

Urgh... I'm really not used to being watched while I cook. It's just like when I went on the field trip. It's making me nervous... What if I'm doing something weird?

In any case, I want to put together something tasty, so I make full use of my Cooking skill as I work.

Feeling a little more anxious than usual, I finish dinner and set the plates in front of Night and the girls.

"All right, shall we dig in?"

"Woof!"

"This looks delicious!"

"Ahhh...I'm so hungry that I can't wait!"

Thankfully, Lexia and Luna seem to enjoy their dinner, and I can rest easy.

"Mmm! This is so good! You're the best, Sir Yuuya!"

"Argh!"

Lexia suddenly clings on to my arm. L-Lexia?!

"H-hey, Lexia! Get away from Yuuya!"

I'm frozen to the spot, so it's Luna who intervenes to forcefully separate Lexia from my arm. L-Lexia definitely isn't what I'd call a shy girl...

"U-ummm...I'm glad you liked it."

To be honest, I know I made the meal well, but it's still nice to hear someone say so.

As I smile at Lexia's compliment, Luna stares at her food thoughtfully.

"Luna? What's the matter?"

She doesn't even react to the sound of my voice. She simply mutters to herself quietly.

"...I can't let Lexia take Yuuya away from me..."

"Huh?"

"Y-Yuuya!"

"Y-yes?"

I sit up straight in surprise when Luna calls my name. Even Lexia is so surprised that she freezes mid-bite.

"Yuuya...ummm...would you feed me?"

"Huh?"

"What did you just say, Luna?!"

"It's just that I'm still not fully recovered. It's so hard to move."

"Give it up, Luna! It's hardly as if not being at full strength affects your ability to eat, right?!"

"Sure it does. If I move too suddenly, then my wounds might open back up. *Sigh*. There's nothing else for it. You're just going to have to help me, Yuuya."

I'm not falling for it, Luna. Weren't you moving normally just a moment ago? And more energetically than when you'd eat?

I'm thinking to myself, pulling a face, when Luna looks up at me through her eyelashes.

"...So you don't want to?"

"Agh..."

It's not that I can't—it's just... But then if Luna really is having trouble eating, then what if I'm hurting her by denying her...?

"...All right. Here. Open wide."

"O-okay. Ahhh..."

"Hey!"

I hear Lexia yell next to me, but I'm far too embarrassed to pay attention to her.

"...How is it?"

"...Hmm. It's good. It's really good."

After Luna takes her first bite, she turns to Lexia.

"Hmph..."

"Grrr! Sir Yuuya! Don't you think I need feeding, too?"

“Huh?! B-but...you’re not injured...”

“By order of the princess!”

“You royal family members are terrifying.”

Please say she’s not going to abuse her authority. There’s nothing I can do against that. I’m just a little guy.

Since I have no choice but to feed Lexia in the same way, Luna soon asks me to feed her another bite... I don’t even have a chance to eat my own dinner. Why are they doing this?

After I finish feeding them both their meals, I can finally start eating my own.

“A-are you both finished now? I’m going to start eating my own dinner, so just hold on—”

“No, Sir Yuuya! Now it’s my turn to feed you!”

“Huh?”

“That’s right, Yuuya. As a token of our appreciation.”

“.....”

I’m totally astounded by what they’re both saying. Especially Luna. If she has the strength to feed me, then she must have had the strength to feed herself, right?

Ignoring my surprise, Lexia and Luna both take food from my plate and hold it out to me.

“Now, say ‘Ahhh!’”

“Yeah, don’t be shy. Just eat.”

“...Okay.”

In the end, there’s only one thing I can say: That was a very stressful dinner.

After dinner, there’s some drama about sleeping arrangements, but mentally exhausted as I am, I manage to survive it and drift off to sleep.

The next day, I make sure Luna is fully healed and decide to head back to where we split off from Owen and the others.

It’s probably quicker to teleport using magic, but since it’s better for Luna’s rehabilitation, and she herself says that she wants to move her body, we decide to walk there instead.

...To be honest, I feel extremely awkward about seeing Owen again after dragging Lexia and Luna back to my place without so much as an explanation, but...I have to apologize to him properly. I was the one in the wrong.

Not that there are any guarantees Owen and the others will still be there.

“Yuuya, aren’t you and Night a bit unfair...? Fighting all the monsters in the Weald knowing you’re so much stronger than them...”

“Woof?”

Luna talks with a kind of faraway look in her eyes, but...I still haven't been able to venture that far into the depths of this forest. And knowing what I do about the sage, I know I still have a lot of training to do. Although, I do agree with the sage that I should train enough so I can protect Night and the rest of my friends, but not so excessively that I become overly powerful.

"Oh, it's the entrance!" Lexia points out happily as soon as the entrance comes into view.

On the way here, we've had to deal with a few Goblin Elites, but we haven't encountered anything in this particular area, so we manage to leave the Weald in one piece.

That's when...

"Hey! Captain! Captain! Look! Look over there!"

"Huh?! Princess Lexia!"

Hearing a voice, I turn toward it to find Owen and the others, who look as rough as they did when I first met them. Even though a whole day has passed, it seems like they waited here for us.

After squinting to see who we might be, Owen runs over to us.

Lexia greets him with a smile.

"Oh, good day to you, Owen."

"Good day! Is that all you have to say?! Please refrain from acting on your own, Your Highness! I'm supposed to be guarding you!"

Lexia bows her head obediently, as if she realizes how much trouble she has caused this time.

"I'm sorry."

"U-um, Owen. I'm sorry, too. I took Lexia with me, and..."

Thinking about it objectively, didn't I kinda kidnap her? Uh-oh... Could they charge me or something?

I look at Owen's face as worries race through my brain. He seems like he's about to say something, but instead he heaves a big sigh.

".....There are many things I would like to say to you, but when I think about Lexia's position and then your position, I'm sure it would have been very difficult to refuse her."

"No! It wasn't Lexia's fault; it was me who got swept up in it all..."

Owen and I are both apologizing to each other at this point, so I wrap it up so the conversation can move on.

"Ahem! Oh, by the way, Your Highness. I've been wondering since you got back... Who's that girl? I've already heard that the little wolf by your feet is Lord Yuuya's companion, but her..."

"Oh, that's right. I never did get the chance to properly introduce you two, did I? This little guy is with me. His name is Night."

"Woof!"

Night barks, cleverly lifting his paw into the air.

"...He seems like quite the smart pup. Lord Night, I thank you for

saving Princess Lexia yesterday.”

“Woof.” Night barks as if to say *Don’t mention it!*

“Wow, he is smart... And the girl?”

“Oh, she’s—”

As I’m about to explain, Lexia puffs out her chest with pride and answers for me for some reason.

“Her name is Luna. She was my assailant. But now she’s my new guard!”

“Huh?”

“...Hey, Yuuya. Tell me this girl really isn’t that much of an idiot.”

As Luna stands there dumbfounded, all I can do is shoot back a strained smile. I had no idea Lexia was going to be so blunt...

Owen’s expression stiffens at Lexia’s response. He grabs Lexia in a flash, jumps back to put some distance between her and Luna, and draws his sword.

Taking it as a signal, the other soldiers draw their swords as well and point them toward Luna.

“What are you doing, Owen?! You’re pointing your sword at Luna. Drop it immediately!”

“I could ask the same of you, Your Highness! Isn’t this girl the assassin who attacked you?!”

“Yes, she is. That’s why I’ve taken her on as my guard!”

“But how do you go from assassin to guard?!”

Lexia, you’re leaving out too much of your explanation. You’re really putting Owen’s nerves through the wringer. Although, it was partly my fault this time, so I can’t really talk.

Surrounded by blades, Luna is holding up both her hands and awkwardly smiling to show that she doesn’t mean to pose any resistance.

“Lexia, do something about these guys.”

“It’ll be a chore, though. Can’t you handle it yourself?”

“Are you that stupid?”

Luna narrows her eyes and snaps at Lexia’s ludicrous suggestion to solve their dilemma.

“What? Why?!”

I step in and add, “Ummm, Owen! About Luna... It is just as Lexia says. She’s her new guard, so there’s no need to worry!”

“And you expect me to swallow that? What if that was the assassin’s goal all along? That still puts Princess Lexia in danger.”

“Dammit...”

I don’t have a response for that. It’s too bad, but what Owen, an established bodyguard, is saying is right.

As I desperately try to think up something to convince Owen and the others that Luna is on our side, Luna sighs heavily.

“...I know you can't trust me, but if I was going to kill Lexia, I would have killed her yesterday...or while we were all sleeping together last night.”

“...Uh, Your Highness?”

“What? We both stayed at Sir Yuuya's house last night, so of course we slept together.”

“...Lord Yuuya?”

“I'm so sorry.”

All I can do is keep apologizing. I feel really bad.

Owen looks like he has a few choice words for us, but as he glances from me to Lexia to Luna, he sighs again and puts away his sword.

“...We still can't put our faith in this girl completely, but we can at least stop brandishing our swords at her.”

“C-Captain?! Are you sure?!”

“What else can we do? From what I saw yesterday, she could have easily killed the princess when they were all sleeping if she had wanted to. Whether she chose not to due to Lord Yuuya's power or because she became Her Highness's guard, as the princess claims... we're in no position to be able to judge right now either way.”

“You worry too much, Owen. Luna serves me now, so can't you just be happy? I mean, she's an amazing assassin, right?!”

“Don't push it.”

Owen looks at Lexia incredulously before turning to Luna with a stern expression on his face.

“...Now, I'm going to take Her Highness's word for it and accept you as one of her guards. Does this mean you'll talk about the person who ordered the assassination?”

“Hmph. I suppose so.”

Luna speaks frankly about the request that was made of her almost as if she no longer fears the Guild of Darkness at all.

“The sort of people who recruit the Guild of Darkness to do their dirty work usually conceal their identities. But this time, the request definitely came from a member of the kingdom's upper classes. And it seems like it may have been made to curry favor with the first prince.”

“What—?!”

“But...why...?”

I remain silent. I'm totally out of the loop and know nothing about the politics of this land. The usually carefree Lexia appears shaken.

The first prince... That would mean her older brother, right? Or maybe her younger brother? Hmm... But then again royal families are complicated. Royal sibling relationships are probably a lot different than those between normal siblings...

“That said, the part about currying favor with the prince is still just speculation. In my world, we hear lots of rumors about the first

prince, but that doesn't mean they're necessarily substantiated."

"What kinds of rumors?"

"Hmm? Well, that he hates his sister...in other words, you."

"....."

Lexia's expression stiffens at the news.

Night approaches Lexia worriedly and snuggles up beside her.

Feeling Night next to her, Lexia scoops him up in her arms.

"Awww...N-Night."

"Woof...woof."

"...Thank you."

They might not be able to communicate with words, but it seems like Lexia understands that Night cares about her, and she smiles softly at him.

"...There's more. I was the one who originally received the request to assassinate Lexia...and within that request was something about Yuuya."

"Huh?! M-me?!"

Up until now, I thought I had nothing to do with this situation, so suddenly hearing my name come up immediately puts me on edge.

"Yeah. But it wasn't about you per se. It was more like some vague information about the possibility that someone may live in the Weald."

"Yeah, but why would anyone know about me...?"

Luna looks surprised by my question.

"Well, Yuuya. Before I attacked Lexia, there had already been at least one attempt on her life. The assassins used for that attack were very skilled, but luckily, Lexia managed to escape into the Weald. The assassins made the mistake of going in after her. Sure enough, none of them returned—the only one who got out was Lexia."

"Oh..."

"Do you understand now? If assassins as skilled as them had been brought down by a monster, then how did Lexia survive? Unlike you and Night, normal people can't just go for a casual stroll in the Weald. Even the title princess means nothing in that forest."

"So are you telling me that I'm not normal?"

Luna ignores me.

"...And when your best assassins are all dead and Lexia is still alive, it's not too far-fetched to deduce that someone might have helped her. This was an assassination attempt on a princess. There was most likely thorough planning involved. Part of the plan would have definitely been to separate Lexia from Owen and the other guards. Which means it had to have been a third party who interfered... We could speculate it was a monster, but, like I said, why would Lexia have been the only one to make it out alive? When all is said and done, not one single

assassin made it home that day.”

“Hmm...”

Owen can't help but vocalize his frustration at the end of Luna's explanation. I feel the same way.

The assassins Luna is talking about were probably those from when I first met Lexia.

I didn't really understand why back then, but there had been a lot of blood and guts on the ground around the Goblin General. Those were probably...

I feel sick, and I'm sure my face has gone pale.

“...Woof?”

“Sir Yuuya?”

“Huh? O-oh, sorry. I'm fine.”

Night and Lexia seem to realize that something's up and call out to check on me.

I don't mean to imply that the life of a human is worth more than the life of anything else, but I can't deny that remembering how the scene looked that day stirs the emotions inside of me.

Not that I have much right to say anything at all after taking the lives of so many monsters.

Thinking about it that way at least helps bring me back to the present.

“I always knew people would find out about you one day, Lord Yuuya, but I never imagined it would be so soon... That's another reason why I want to take you to His Majesty.”

“Ah, a-about that...”

Owen reminded me about the other thing I came here to do besides dropping off Lexia and Luna. I broach the subject very cautiously.

“Ummm...I'm sorry. If we had departed yesterday, it would have been fine, but...”

“D-don't tell me...”

Owen turns white as a sheet, making me feel even guiltier.

“I'm so sorry! Can we please postpone my audience with the king until next time? I have somewhere else I need to be...”

“Whaaat?! You won't come to the capital with us, Sir Yuuya?” Lexia asks, stunned.

It's just that once Golden Week is over, I have to go back to school.

“I really am sorry! I'll definitely meet your king next time...although I'm not sure when that will be...!”

I know how rude I'm being, so all I can do is apologize.

Owen looks like his soul has left his body.

“O-oh, really... Ha-ha, ha-ha-ha-ha... I guess there's no helping it if you have another appointment...”

“...Hey, Lexia. Is that guy all right? He doesn't look okay.”

“He’s fine. This happens all the time.”

“What’s that supposed to mean...?”

Luna looks at Owen with an expression I’m not sure how to describe. Argh, I feel so bad about adding to Owen’s troubles...

As I desperately apologize some more, Owen straightens up as if he has recovered from the shock.

“Hmm! Then when do you think the next opportunity will arise?”

“Well...I haven’t made any definitive plans yet, so I can’t say.”

I’m still not sure about how the school year looks. If I was still going to my old school, I’d have a rough idea, but I still can’t predict the events calendar for my new one...

“I see... Then please make your own way to the capital when the timing is right for you.”

“Huh? A-are you sure? But...what about the king’s schedule...?”

I can’t hide my surprise that Owen is allowing me to come at a time that’s more convenient for me. I mean, is it even possible to meet the head of a country without making an appointment beforehand?

“It would indeed be difficult to set up an audience as soon as you reach the capital, but if you could wait a day or two, then I think His Majesty could make some time. It isn’t as if there are any wars being waged right now, and things are quiet on both the foreign and domestic fronts... I suppose there are those rumors about the first prince, but as the girl says, they’re nothing but speculation at this point.”

“Y-yeah...”

Is this really okay? It does help me out a lot, though.

“Then...I’m sorry, but we’ll meet again when the timing is better.”

“Hmm, understood. If you go straight along that road over there, you’ll soon come to a town. If you proceed farther and continue down the same road, you should arrive at the capital. Unfortunately, I can’t give you a horse or anything...”

“I-it’s okay! I’m sorry for causing so much trouble. Thank you for everything.”

When I follow the direction of Owen’s finger, I see a paved road stretching into the distance. With it being just one road, at least I shouldn’t get lost.

“All right...then let us depart. There’s a lot we have to look into now.”

“Please leave my former colleagues and the associated risks to me. It’s the least I can do as thanks for taking me into your employ.”

“...We’re counting on you.”

I’m still worried about how they’re going to treat Luna, but I’m relieved they’re just wary of her for now.

“Awww... Sir Yuuya, can you really not come with us?”

“Yeah...I’m sorry. But next time, I’ll go to the capital myself, so...”

“...If I try to keep you here, it’s just going to trouble you, isn’t it? Then it’s fine. I’ll let you go this time! But you’d better come visit me in the capital, okay? Promise?”

“Sure, I promise.”

It looks like my reply satisfies Lexia, as she nods and enters the grand carriage that awaits her.

As Night and I watch her get in, a fidgety Luna approaches.

“Hey...Yuuya. I caused a lot of problems for you, huh?”

“Hey, you didn’t cause me problems...more like a lot of confusion and worry. But I’m relieved things turned out okay for you in the end.”

“Yuuya...”

“Woof, woof!”

“And...Night too, huh? You were really worried about me...?” Luna murmurs hesitantly.

At that moment, Lexia calls over to Luna from the carriage. It looks like they’re ready to leave.

“Luna! We’re going now, so hurry up and get in!”

“Okay, I’ll be right there!”

It may have only been a short conversation, but I feel a smile forming on my face as I realize the two of them are going to get along just fine. I hope I can spend some quality time getting to know those two in the future.

Luna is chasing after the slowly moving carriage when she suddenly stops in her tracks and runs back my way.

Then she leans in and—

“Yuuya.”

“Wha—?!”

“Arghhhhhhh!”

I hear Lexia’s enraged scream coming from the carriage, but I still haven’t registered why.

As I stand there frozen in shock, Luna turns red and speaks again.



“Th-this kiss... It’s for everything you’ve done for me until now and...uhhh...my declaration of war!”

“What kind of war?!”

“Good question! That’s for you to think about!”

Luna leaves me with just those words and runs back over to the carriage with a spring in her step.

“Hey, Owen! Stop this carriage right now! I—I want to kiss Sir Yuuya, too!”

“Oh, look at that. Isn’t the weather so lovely today?”

“OWEN!!!”

In contrast to Lexia’s yells, Owen sounds perfectly calm.

“Stop! Stop the carriage right now! I want to do it, too... I WANT TO KISS SIR YUUYA, TOOOOO!”

Lexia leans out of the carriage and desperately reaches her hand toward me.

Stupefied, I stare as she goes past, and I can’t help but touch my cheek where Luna kissed me.

CHAPTER 2

Akatsuki

Now that I've said good-bye to Luna and the others, today marks the end of Golden Week, but I'm still thinking about the meaning behind Luna's kiss.

"What was that all about...? And she's declaring war...? On who...? I don't get it..."

I don't know how girls think, so all I can do is stress about it.

No matter how many days pass, that moment replays in my head. Because I can't stop thinking about it, I've gotten into the habit of waking up early every morning to take a walk in the other world to clear my head.

That's when—

"Whoa..."

"Woof."

Night and I stare in awe at the sight before us.

Part of the forest clears away, like a hole has been shot through it, to reveal a lake sparkling in the light of the morning sun.

"Wow... I can't believe a place like this exists here..."

"Woof."

Night and I throw caution to the wind and inch closer to the lake.

When we look into the water, it so clear that you can see the bottom.

I heard somewhere that clear water means the water contains no nutrients, but the waterweeds look fresh and green, and I can see fish swimming gracefully below the surface.

It's quite a big lake, so I wonder if there are any underwater monsters living in it, but I can't see anything, and my Detect Presence

skill isn't pinging anything, either.

"...Right! Shall we bathe here today, Night? You don't get the chance to enjoy a view like this one from the bath very often, after all."

"Woof!"

With Night's agreement, I unpack my bath set. It'll be nice to get rid of the sweat from walking.

Since this area feels even less Japanese than some of the others, I decide to try out the Jacuzzi this time.

I immediately get into the bath, and as I sit enjoying the view, I can't help but feel like I'm living a life of luxury.

"Ahhh... The water feels so good..."

"Woof..."

"Oink..."

.....Huh?

Hearing an unfamiliar sound, I turn to look next to me...and find a little pig that I have never seen before enjoying the bath alongside us.

"Uhhh...where did you come from?"

"Oink?"

I pick up the strange little pig that appeared in the bath and look it in the eyes. All it does is cock its head cutely in confusion. Even though I'm the one who should probably be doing that...

Hmm...when I think about it, maybe it was already close by when I brought out the bath and made it invisible.

I look back at the piglet. It's covered in short red hair, and its black eyes are looking back at me without a hint of malice.

Its hair feels soft but different than Night's. It's nice.

"I don't know what's going on here, but do you want to keep taking a bath with us?"

"Oink!"

The little pig settles comfortably in the water next to me... I guess it's pretty cute.

As I stroke the pig and Night, who has inched closer, I activate my Appraise skill.

Meng Huai

Level: 490, **Mana:** 60000, **Attack:** 5000, **Defense:** 5000,

Agility: 3000, **Intelligence:** 10000, **Luck:** 10000

I'm confused by this unfamiliar species name. I can read it, but it's not like anything I've seen in Japan. If I can read it and it doesn't make sense, then maybe it's Chinese?

"...Meng Huai?"

"Oink?"

Well, I suppose this is another world, so it's not surprising that there

are species of monsters I've never heard of.

Also...its stats are kinda lopsided.

Its attack and defense are pretty low for its level, but its mana is off the charts.

"You're a strange one, aren't you?"

"Oink!"

"Hey, that wasn't necessarily a compliment, you know."

The little pig deftly uses its front legs to make a motion like it's scratching its head in good humor. I guess it is pretty cute.

As I admire the pig's cuteness, a message suddenly appears in front of me.

"Your **Appraise** skill has met the proficiency level required and has been upgraded into **Identify** skill. Successfully tamed **Meng Huai**."

"What? Why?!"

Did I do anything to tame this little one?! All we did was bathe together!

Is it because we've hung out together naked?!

I feel far from put out though. This little pig is cute, and I'd be happy to have it, but...

"Hey, buddy. It looks like I've tamed you... Are you okay with that?"

"Oink...? Oink?!"

So you didn't realize, either!

The little piglet looks very surprised, but it eventually nods and turns to me.

"Oink. Oink, oink."

"I don't have any idea what you're saying..."

I can't tell exactly what the pig is trying to convey, but somehow, it looks like it has accepted that it's going to stay with us. I hope that's okay, though. It is a wild animal, after all.

In any case, it seems my Comprehend Languages skill won't work on it, just like it doesn't on Night. I feel like it's probably because animal cries and verbalized languages aren't really the same thing. Animal noises are all based off instinct and signals, so maybe that's why. Yet even without words, I can just somehow tell what they're trying to say.

Night looks up at me as I try to communicate with the piglet.

"Woof?"

"Hmm? Oh. It looks like this guy is one of us now. So make sure to get along, okay?"

"Woof!"

Hmm... Looks like I'm better at communicating with Night than

with the pig... Oh well. It's not like I can understand every little thing Night says, either. Plus, Night and I have been together for much longer, so I guess it's only natural. I'm sure I'll come to understand this little piggy better in time.

"Anyway...since you're now part of the gang—or rather, part of the family—we'd better think of a name for you."

"Woof, woof!"

"Oink!"

Hmm... Now, what should we call you...?

I've never heard of a name like Meng Huai.

I stare at the pig as I try to think up a new name.

That's when I decide to use a name based on its appearance, just like I did for Night.

"...I've got it. Your name is Akatsuki."

His red fur and dark eyes remind me of the colors of the sky just before daybreak, so I decide to name him Akatsuki, like the red dawn. Anyway, my pets, my rules, so I won't be taking any complaints.

The newly named Akatsuki pipes up happily.

"Oink! Oink, oink!"

"Oh, do you like your new name? Good!"

I tried my best not to make his name sound too weird, and I'm glad he's so happy with it.

Night and Akatsuki start communicating right away and settle down in a spot a little bit away from me to enjoy the bath.

Now...

"...I wonder what this Identify skill is..."

I'd put that thought on the back burner while I came up with a name for Akatsuki, but now it's time to think about my new skill.

Rereading the message, I think I hit a certain level of proficiency, and that made the skill change... I wonder how it's different.

And since my Appraise skill turned into Identify, this probably means my other skills will eventually change, too, right?

"...Well, I might as well use my Identify skill on my Identify skill."

As soon as I activate the skill, a message appears.

Identify—The advanced version of the **Appraise** skill. You can now see more information about a subject and see what skill sets they have.

"I'm not sure what that means exactly, but it seems useful."

Maybe I should be more surprised and have more thoughts about it, but I have one main takeaway from the message.

Being able to see skill sets means I'll be able to check out my enemies' abilities now...so I'll be able to predict how they might attack me. That's really useful. It should help me avoid danger even

better than before.

The only thing is, I wonder what would happen if I looked at the stats and skills of a person.

It's like personal information. I shouldn't do that recklessly...

I'm still not really sure how to use it, but for now, I should just limit its use to monsters, I think.

That's why I decide to first try it out on Night and Akatsuki.

"Hey, Night! Akatsuki! Do you mind if I check out your skill sets?"

I usually just look at Night's stats whenever I want, so it's a bit strange to ask, but I do anyway.

"Woof!"

"Oink!"

It looks like I have consent from them both, maybe? So I start with Night.

Night

Skills: Bite: 10, Claws: 10, Mana Manipulation, Silent Casting, Detect Presence, Dodge, Detect Weakness, Extrasensory, the Wolf God of Night's Heavenly Might (currently unavailable).

"Whoa! What a beast!"

"Woof?"

Night cutely tilts his head at my comment.

Wow... What is it with all these awesome skills?!

He's already learned Silent Casting, he's at the maximum skill level for biting and claw attacks, and on top of everything else, what the heck is the Wolf God of Night's Heavenly Might?! Although it looks like he can't use it yet!

"Night...looks like you'll have quite the career. There's no doubt about it."

"Woof? *Whine.*"

As I stroke Night's head, he rubs up against me. He's got a big, bright future ahead of him, but for now, he's just my cute, pampered puppy. He's so cute that I don't mind what he becomes.

"All right, you're up, Akatsuki."

"Oink."

When I look at Akatsuki's skill set, I see...

Akatsuki

Skills: Mana Manipulation, Exorcise, Curse Break, Holy Sanctuary

"You're not too shabby, either."

"Oink?"

I'm not sure whether I can use most of Akatsuki's skills in battle.

Holy Sanctuary in particular has me puzzled.

“Hey, Akatsuki. How about you try using your Holy Sanctuary skill for me?”

“Oink.”

When I ask Akatsuki to demonstrate his skill that I don’t understand, he activates it without a moment’s hesitation.

Then...

“Wow!”

“Woof!”

A kind of warm light shines out from Akatsuki and spreads across the whole forest.

As it hits the lake, the water glows faintly while the trees and flowers burst into even more life than before.

“Could this be...a healing skill?”

“Oink.”

Akatsuki nods cutely as if to tell me I’m right.

But it seems like Holy Sanctuary could have even more effects than that.

I mean, it’s beautiful, but it also made an entire lake glow. It felt like everything around us was purified... I feel almost refreshed in a way.

I can’t really investigate any deeper right now, but it seems like Akatsuki is more suited to healing and support than battle like Night.

“Well, now I know how amazing you are, too.”

“Oink...!”

I got a new skill, and we welcomed a new member to our family. Lots happened today, and thankfully none of it was bad.

While I’m petting Night and Akatsuki and enjoying my bath, Night suddenly jumps out and runs toward home.

“Huh?! Night?!”

My first instinct is to chase after my pup, but I soon remember that I’m not wearing any clothes. As I get dressed in a hurry, Night comes back with something in his mouth.

“Woof.”

“What are you doing?! Running off like that... You scared me, you know.”

“Woof. Woof!”

The item in Night’s mouth is my watch. He cleverly lays it down in front of me and paws at me.

When I look at the watch, it’s already time to start getting ready for school.

“What?! It’s that late already?!”

Now that Golden Week is over, normal lessons are about to resume, so I hurry up and get ready.

“Thanks, Night! You saved my ass! Sorry, Akatsuki, I’ll be back soon!”

“Woof...!”

“Oink!”

As I rush home in a panic with teleportation magic, I quickly get changed, make myself a light breakfast, and then hurry out the door.

As I head to school, I feel like my head is clear and that I’ve successfully switched emotional gears.

“All right, homeroom time—!”

Ms. Sawada announces homeroom in her usual lazy tone, and we quickly go over the plan for the day.

Then, at the end, once she’s wraps up, a smirk appears on her face as if she has just remembered something.

“Oh, one more thing... The Ball Tournament is coming up.”

While I sit there puzzled by Ms. Sawada’s dramatically given announcement, the rest of the class bursts into chatter.

“All riiiiight! Let’s get a good score in the tournament and get us some more money for the school festival!”

“This is gonna be a great chance to raise some more money for it!”

It seems like, once again, your position at the end of the tournament decides how much funding you’ll get for the festival, just like when we went on the field trip.

Hmm, I wonder if the quality of the stalls really changes that much depending on what budget you get.

As I wonder, Ms. Sawada seems to guess that I have questions, so she comes and explains everything for me.

“Hmm? I think I explained a little about the school festival last time when we had the field trip, but...are you still trying to grasp how big it’s going to be?”

“Huh? Oh yeah.”

“I see... Well, to put it bluntly, our school festival is the biggest there is. To the point where TV stations come to cover the event every year and really famous artists come to perform live for us.”

Whoa, it’s already on an entirely different level than I’m used to!

“I suppose the stands that receive the lowest budget aren’t all too different than those at other high school festivals. Those groups borrow desks from the classrooms and set them up outside and stuff.”

“Oh...”

Well, to be honest, that’s pretty standard, isn’t it? I’m thinking as Ms. Sawada smirks at me.

“But guess what! For the fancier parts of our festival, students can hire vendors to come and build their stands for them. They can employ professionals to design the haunted house and fit it with all

kinds of creepy contraptions... If students are performing, they even have the funds to buy amazing costumes, and everything, including all the props and lighting, can be ordered.”

Incredible... Is that even classed as a school festival anymore?! I’ve never even imagined one on that scale.

Ms. Sawada nods at me with satisfaction as I struggle to form words.

“Great, it seems like you’re finally getting an idea of just how awesome our school festival is. Now, with that in mind, you’ll start to see the number of school events increase over the year. The first thing to get through is the Ball Tournament, which, as you know, is going to impact this class’s stall at the festival, so do your best!”

It seems like every event is important at this school...

That said, I can’t deny that I’m totally pumped.

It looks like the others are excited, too.

“All right, do your best and all that!” Ms. Sawada says, concluding homeroom.

To prepare for the Ball Tournament, which Ms. Sawada talked about in homeroom, our gym classes are all going to be dedicated to practicing ball sports.

For the tournament, each person will choose from sports like soccer, basketball, dodgeball, tennis, and table tennis to determine the class teams. The teams score ten points for coming first in a tournament, five points for coming second, and three points for coming third. Then when all the scores have been added up, the class with the most points wins.

“All right, today you’re going to play soccer. The teams have already been chosen for you, but you can all decide within your teams which position each student will play. And just to let you know in advance, in the next class we’ll be playing basketball.”

““““Okay!””””

The whole class replies enthusiastically to our gym teacher, Mr. Ooiwa.

When I check what team Mr. Ooiwa has put me on, I see that I’m on the same team as Ryou and Shingo. Akira is on the opposing side, though.

From what I can see, the Ball Tournament teams are coed, because Kaede’s, Rin’s, and Yukine’s names are alongside ours.

“Hey, guys!”

“Looks like we’re on the same team! Let’s win this thing!”

“We’ve got Ryou, so there’s no need to worry about that.”

“That’s true...”

“I—I don’t think I’m going to very useful in this game, but...I’ll try my best.”

“Yeah, same here. I haven’t ever played soccer properly before.”

I had soccer classes when I was in elementary and junior high school, but the rules were never explained to me in depth. Although it doesn’t look like there are that many.

Plus, the schools always taught you things like soccer and baseball under the assumption that you played them when you were little. I never did, so I have no idea what the rules are. I guess I could have looked them up, but I’m not really interested, so... I got made fun of a lot for that.

As I space out, Ryou seems surprised.

“Yuuya, are you telling me you’ve never played soccer before?”

“Ah... I never used to play it with friends, and I didn’t learn the rules properly in school.”

“Oh... Do you at least understand what a goalkeeper is? You know, someone who stands in front of the goal and tries to intercept balls kicked by the other team.”

“Oh, I know that, but I’m not sure about things like where a goalkeeper can and can’t use their hands and stuff.”

Being a goalkeeper isn’t as easy as just stopping the ball from going in the net. There are rules about only using hands in certain positions, and that’s what I don’t get.

Ryou kindly walks out onto the field and points at one of the lines.

“As long as you’re behind this line, you can use your hands. But since you don’t know any of the other rules, then how about you try that position first?”

“Are you sure you want me to be goalkeeper?”

“Yeah. I’m not saying I’ll be able to stop every ball from coming your way, but I’ll give it my best shot.”

“Great idea! I’m sure Yuuya will do a great job defending us!”

Ryou grins wide enough to show his bright white smile, and Kaede also encourages me with a grin.

“Okay, then I guess I’ll be the keeper this time.”

“I’ll be close by, so I’ll teach you some more rules as we go if I get the chance.”

“You will? Thank you!”

“Awww, come on, guys. Where’s the passion? Although I guess it’s okay this time if we’re just showing Yuuya the rules.”

“...Because that’s one of our strategies, too.”

Shingo seems to know he’s not very good at sports, which is why he hung out around the goal the last time they played soccer and probably why he can teach me the rules if he has time. I’m really grateful to him for that.

Plus, we have Ryou on our side, so I can go into this gym class feeling pretty confident about things.

The rest of the team decide their positions and what plays to use, and the match finally starts.

As expected, when Ryou gets hold of the ball, he can cut through the enemy team with unmatched power.

“Arghhhh! Ryou is too good!”

“You won’t get past m— Aaargh! He slipped through!”

“He’s going through us too fast!”

“Way to go, Ryou!”

“I’m so glad you’re on our side!”

The girls cheerfully shout their support for Ryou, too, just as loud as the boys.

As Ryou plows forward, he soon finds himself surrounded by almost every other opposing player and unable to move.

“Tch...! I can’t go anywhere...!”

“HA-HA-HA-HA! How about that?! How do you like the taste of my, the prince of Ousei Academy’s, footwork?!”

“Akira, no! Go for the ball by all means, but don’t get in the way of your own team like that!”

Everything’s happening quite far away from me, but after getting better vision from all my leveling up in the other world, I can see Ryou and the others fighting hard to take the ball from one another.

But trusty Ryou soon finds an opening and passes to a nearby teammate. Now we’re on the attack again.

After a few passes between the team to confuse the opposing side, the ball goes flying into the goal.

“Yeeaaaahhh!!!”

“Dammit! Ryou is far too good a player...!”

“I’m glad we’ll be on the same team for the tournament, but as an opponent, he’s super annoying!”

I suppose if you look at it from the perspective of the tournament, we’re all on the same side, so there couldn’t be a more reassuring ally.

As we keep playing, Ryou sticks to his word and doesn’t let any of the other team get close to our goal. He just keeps making shot after shot instead.

“Wow... Ryou really is unbeatable...”

“Ah-ha-ha...there are some people in other classes and in senior grades who are just as good as, if not better than, Ryou, though.”

“Seriously?”

“Yeah, the Soccer Club are regulars at national tournaments.”

It’s kinda surprising to hear there might be people even better than Ryou at this school.

I always knew that Ousei Academy is a school for the elite, but I had no idea it was such a powerhouse in sports as well...

That said, the opposing team seems to have gradually improved

their coordination to stop Ryou in his tracks. They're getting more and more possession now.

In the midst of it all, I see a sly smile spread across Rin's face as she approaches Kaede.

"Hey, Kaede. I've just thought of a good plan. Wanna give it a try?"

"A good plan?"

"That's right. It shouldn't be too difficult. All you have to do is jump."

"J-jump?"

The two girls casually chat even though it's the middle of the match. Then Kaede suddenly starts to jump on the spot.

"Uhhh...like this?"

""Gah!""

At that precise moment, my and Shingo's eyes bulge in shock, and we hurriedly look away.

But the rest of the guys on the field, who had just been fiercely playing, can't stop staring.

"Holy shi—! Look at them bounce. Just look at them..."

"It's like staring into heaven..."

"Wanna quit the game and spectate instead?"

"Are you guys stupid?! We're in the middle of a match here!"

Ryou is confused as to why all the guys, both friend and foe, have pervy looks on their faces and the girls are standing there dumbfounded.

"I had no idea this would be so effective..."

"Hold up, Rin! What are you talking about?! And why is everybody looking at me like that all of a sudden?!"

"...Kaede's just so naive."

"Exactly! Especially when she has those bazookas on her chest."

"Rin, can you stop being mean?! Hey... What the—?!"

""GAHHHHH!!!""

At that very moment, Rin mischievously grabs Kaede's boobs, and every man watching gets a nosebleed at the same time.

I'm using every ounce of physical power that I gained by leveling up in the other world to keep my eyes averted so I don't suffer the same fate...even though I can feel that I'm super red in the face!

It looks like Shingo got a good look at the sexiness playing out in front of us, too, as he's looking away with a face that's as red as mine. It seems like Rin was after this result, though. D-damn, she's devious...!

In the midst of the pandemonium, a blushing Ryou scratches his cheek.

"Oh...guess I should go on the attack now."

Ryou takes his umpteenth shot of the match.

“Way to go, Kaede. She’s basically wiped out all the boys.”

“...They’re totally under her spell.”

“I wonder if we can use this tactic in the actual tournament. We’d probably win then.”

“Ahhh!! Rin...!”

“Sorry, sorry! But how about we show the boys a little support?”

“What kind of face am I supposed to make when you do something like that?! Ahhh...this is so embarrassing...”

“...Don’t worry. It’s probably your chest that they’re going to be looking at for the rest of the match rather than your face.”

“N-NOOOOOO!”

It looks like Kaede and Rin are enjoying themselves... As long as they’re having fun... A lot of guys fell victim to Kaede’s boobs today, but maybe the biggest victim in all of this is Kaede.

As the game resumes, the boys on the ground begin to get up in a daze.

“Heh... Heh-heh-heh-heh-heh... I can see it... I can really see it... That big bouncing heaven...!”

“Ahhh... I can feel the strength welling up inside me...”

“With this second wind, we won’t lose to Ryou and the others...!”

I totally get it. Seeing Kaede and Rin has lit a fire within every guy’s belly, both friend and foe. I’m not sure if that’s really a good thing, but...at the very least, even though it wasn’t the most wholesome method of getting everyone fired up, in roundabout way, their intentions were pure.

Every player’s movements as a whole have improved, but Akira’s plays have gotten particularly good. So good that he actually manages to take the ball from Ryou.

“Crap...!”

“Ah-ha-ha-ha-ha! How about that?! The clumsy show I gave you before is over! From now on, I am invincible!”

He might be crazy in theory, but he’s able to fend off the attacks from my teammates with some fancy footwork, getting closer and closer to our goal after each attempt.



“Take this, Yuuya! A strike from I, the famed prince of soccer...!”

He may have kicked the ball in the wrong direction in his last match, but this time, Akira sends it flying powerfully toward the goal that I’m defending.

It comes at me so fast that no normal person would be able to catch it.

“Agh!!! S-sorry, Yuuya! Th-there’s no way I could...!”

It’s going too fast for Shingo to reach it, and there’s no one else left in front of me to defend the net.

On top of that, the ball is hurtling toward the goalposts on a sharp curve.

As I quickly check where the goalposts are, I react in a split second and catch the ball.

“Huh?”

“U-uh... Did it also look to you guys like he teleported or something just now...?”

It seems like my movements were too fast for everyone’s eyes to keep up with, so they think I teleported or something.

Ryou also appears lost for words as I ask him one simple question.

“What do I do with the ball once I’ve caught it?”

“U-uh...you could pass it to one of us. Or you could try to throw or kick the ball as far as you can toward the other end, and another one of us can take it from there.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yeah, since you have the chance, you might as well try to throw it as hard as you can to someone.”

“...All right.”

Ryou tells me what to do and then runs back farther onto the field toward Akira.

Hmm... First thing’s first, I should try to throw the ball as far as I can, right?

All right, let’s send this thing flying.

Careful not to step over the line that Ryou pointed out earlier, I keep hold of the ball.

Then, being very careful (since I’m always hurling the Absolute Spear around), I throw it—

“Hup.”

The air begins to vibrate.

““““AAARGH!””””

“.....Huh?”

The ball is traveling at lightning speed, creating what looks like a shock wave. Every time it passes close to one of the guys, it blows them away. While everyone watches in shock, it hurtles past the

goalkeeper and lands in the back of the net.

.....

“...Is that a goal...?”

““““Is that all you’re concerned about?!”””” everyone points out.

After a taste of one of the ball sports in gym, a tense atmosphere hangs over my class.

“—All right, then let’s decide on the team members for the tournament!”

““““Yeaah!””””

All the boys and girls cheer in unison.

Right now, we’re having a meeting to decide who will be on what team on the day of the tournament.

The moderator for the meeting is our class rep, Osamu Kageno.

Osamu is a serious-looking boy with trimmed black bangs that perfectly frame his glasses.

He’s usually a quiet guy—he’s very smart and kind, too—but during these events, he seems just like everyone else and gets super excited. There aren’t a lot of guys like him, so I think he’s pretty cool.

Since the soccer match, we’ve been able to use subsequent gym classes to try out the other sports, so everyone can pick the sport they’re best at, but...I can’t decide. I’m still no good at controlling my strength in this world, so if I kick a ball, we could end up with a repeat of last time and someone could get hurt. If that’s a possibility, then maybe it would be for the best if I didn’t play in a match.

All of the other sports are kinda similar to soccer, so I wonder if it would be okay for me to play any of those instead or if it would cause trouble... It would be best for me not to play any at all, then we could get through the tournament without any issues, but since this is a school event, I have to do something. And I *want* to be able to take part as well.

As the meeting goes on and I worry about what to do, before long everyone except me has chosen what team to join.

That’s when my classmates turn around to look at me, all of them sounding like they’re troubled by something.

““““Hmm... About Yuuya...””””

“Y-yeah, sorry?”

It looks like it’s not just me, but the rest of the class who are also wondering where to put me, so I can’t help but apologize.

“Don’t worry about it! We’re just trying not to fight over you.”

“Y-yeah, you’d be useful in any t-team that you’re on... That’s why we’re having trouble with this.”

“...Really?”

Ryou and Shingo make me feel a lot better. I feel bad that my body

is causing so many problems lately, though... Usually, it comes in handy, but right now it's an issue.

As we all wonder what to do, Kaede shoots her hand in the air.

"I've got it! Why don't we choose a leader for each team and then have them play rock-paper-scissors to decide who gets Yuuya? I think Yuuya would be a good fit for any of them, so this is probably the fairest way to decide..."

""""That's it!""""

Kaede's idea resonates with the others, so we choose the team leaders for each sport and get the rock-paper-scissors battle underway.

Everyone looks like they're taking it very seriously, so it feels different from a normal game.

"...If I win this, we can get Yuuya on our team..."

"If we get Yuuya, then there's a better chance that we'll win matches."

"...And if we advance in the tournament, more girls will come to cheer for us."

"Which means—"

""""I must not lose this game!""""

"Can you really not think of any better reasons?!" blurts out Ryou inadvertently at the team leaders' motivations.

...Well, whatever the reason, I'm still happy they all want me so bad.

People used to treat me like I was in the way and only ever held my team back, so it's nice to be relied upon like this.

There's a lot of things I have to be more careful about than regular people, but I want to give it my all no matter which team I end up on.

"...Ha! I can see it now! This hand is gonna get us Yuuya!"

"Hmph... I've already finished making all the calculations I need to win this thing!"

"What are you both talking about? Don't you know that it's I, the prince of rock-paper-scissors, who's destined to win?!"

""""ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS—I!""""

The battle is over in seconds.

There's only one winner.

And that is...

"I—I won..."

It's Shingo.

While everyone else threw out scissors, Shingo chose rock.

"Aaargh!"

"I—I lost... But my calculations were supposed to be infallible..."

"Maybe I should just resign myself to being the prince of bad luck."

As Shingo looks worriedly at the crushed faces of everyone who lost, Osamu, who is even quieter than usual, nods.

“Okay. You’re representing the table tennis team, weren’t you, Shingo? In that case, I’d like to put Yuuya on that team... Is that all right with you?”

“O-oh yeah.”

—And that’s how I ended up playing table tennis.

“Wow, it’s like...you ended up on the team I least expected.”

“I did?”

“Y-yeah... I won you for our team, so I shouldn’t really say this, but I also thought that you’d be more at home on the basketball or dodgeball teams...”

As I’m walking home with Ryou, Shingo, and some other friends after school, we chat about what happened in the meeting earlier.

“I think Ryou’s soccer skills are way cooler than mine, though. I didn’t do much at all in that class... And when Akira steps on the court, he really does become the prince of basketball...”

“That guy will stick *prince* in front of anything.”

That’s true. Akira does call himself prince of something or other any chance he gets. If he would just stop talking, it wouldn’t surprise me if people started asking if he’s actually a prince. Although I don’t know if there would ever be any opportunity for someone to outright call him that.

“I still don’t know much about table tennis, so there’s not much I can say apart from I’ll do my best!”

We still haven’t practiced table tennis in gym class, so I’m not sure how good I’ll be at it.

Still, I’d like to try my hardest to meet the expectations of my classmates.

“—Excuse me, are you Yuuya Tenjou?”

“Huh?”

As I’m chatting with my classmates, I suddenly hear a voice behind me.

When I look to see who’s asking about me, a man in a black suit and a woman are standing there.

“Yes, I am, but...how do you know my name?” I ask as the man pulls out a business card.

“My name is Kurosawa, and I represent a talent agency.”

“A talent agency? ...Huh?!”

We all look in shock at the man standing in front of us—Kurosawa.

He ignores us and continues:

“Yuuya Tenjou... How would you like to be famous?”

CHAPTER 3

The Scout

“You’re asking me if I want to be famous...?”

I’m too taken aback by Kurosawa’s words to do anything but stand there in shock.

Why me?

He didn’t answer how he knew my name, but since he did know it, he must have been searching for me specifically...

But why would someone from a talent agency know who I am?

Kurosawa seems to have guessed what I’m thinking and explains with a neutral look on his face.

“The talent agency where I work employs Miu, the model you took pictures with before, and the photographer Hikaru. We heard about you from them, and the boss was interested... She’s the lady standing behind me, by the way.”

“Wh-what...?!”

So it seems like they heard about me from Miu and Hikaru, then.

I didn’t think I’d ever have anything else to do with modeling, so this is coming as a complete surprise.

And on top of that, the woman behind Kurosawa is the boss?! She hasn’t said a single word yet, but you’re telling me she came all this way to see me herself? With her arms folded the entire time, she does kinda give off the sort of confident and mature vibe you’d expect of a bigwig. That might just be my stereotype of bosses, though.

“Th-that’s amazing, Yuuya! You could be a celebrity!”

“Y-yeah, Yuuya! Remember that photo shoot you did? You looked so cool!”

As soon as my friends snap back to their senses, they all start talking

excitedly.

“Wooow, you always did have that special aura around you, Yuuya. I knew you’d make it big someday, but...”

“I-it’s actually more surprising that you’ve never been on anyone’s radar before this...”

“Yeah, that’s true. I’d never heard anything about someone like you before, even though your old junior high and elementary schools are close to mine.”

The reason Ryou had never heard of me is because I didn’t look like this until recently, so that can’t be helped...but then again, I had no idea that a guy as cool and friendly as Ryou existed, either, so I guess gossip travels around town less than you’d think.

As I try to wrap my head around it, an expressionless Kurosawa asks me again, “So, Yuuya, how about it? Would you like to become a celebrity or not?”

“Uhhh...well...I’m sorry. I’m really happy that you asked me, but it’s a little sudden... I can’t just decide on the spot like this. I’m really sorry...”

I apologize and bow my head. Kurosawa momentarily lifts an eyebrow, but the others are standing there in shock. When I look at the boss, she’s still standing behind Kurosawa with her arms folded and also looks surprised.

“Y-Yuuya?! Are you sure?! You could be a star!”

“E-e-even though you could be friends with all the idols and voice actors you see on TV? Y-y-you could introduce them to me!”

“Aren’t you jumping the gun a little, Shingo?”

I don’t know much about voice actors and celebrity idols, but I do know it’s rare for Shingo to react like this.

Even Ryou is a little taken aback.

That’s when the boss of the talent agency begins to get a little panicky and finally says something.

“W-wait! Are you really going to refuse us?! Who doesn’t want to be famous? And our agency is extremely up-and-coming right now...!”

“I know most people want to be famous, like you all say, but I haven’t really figured out what it is that I want to do in the future yet. I haven’t found anything that I truly love, something that makes me stop and go ‘This is it!’ ...Besides, I’m happy just living my life and hanging out with my friends at school. And I want to keep enjoying that. Plus, I don’t think it would go very well for me if I got involved in the celebrity world anyway...”

It’s thanks to all my leveling up in the other world that I’m finally able to enjoy my life like this in the first place.

Some people might say it’s because I haven’t decided what I want to do with my life yet that I should give being famous a try, but I don’t

think it's something I can start and then just give up and quit all of a sudden.

I don't know what I want to do with my future, but...I know I'd like to take a little more time to properly think about it now that I have more options.

Ryou listens to what I have to say and cracks a wry smile.

"Sigh... I have no doubt you'd make a great celebrity, Yuuya, but...I guess that would make it harder for you to see us, and that'd make me feel lonely. But more than anything, I think it's most important that you do what you want to do."

"T-to me it feels like a wasted opportunity, but...if that's how you feel, then we all respect your decision."

Throughout my whole life, I've only ever been rejected, so it makes me happy to hear what the others have to say.

"So, yeah...I am really grateful for the opportunity, but there's no way I can consider becoming a celebrity at this point in time. I'm sorry."

I bow my head toward Kurosawa and the agency boss.

The boss drags off Kurosawa a little ways away in a fluster and starts to talk with him.

"H-hey, Kurosawa! You're leading this conversation in the wrong direction!"

"Ma'am, weren't *you* the one who wanted to do the scouting?"

"H-how dare you?! Just do something!"

"Sigh."

It looks like their conversation is over, and Kurosawa walks up to me again. His face is as inexpressive as ever.

"In that case, we'll leave you alone."

"Huh?"

"What the hell, Kurosawa?!" The boss is totally floored, but Kurosawa himself doesn't seem to care at all.

"What is it?"

"Oh, it's...just that you withdrew so easily..."

I guess they didn't want me as badly as Ryou and the others were suggesting after all.

If they really wanted me, then they probably would have tried something else... All that's happening is the boss keeps talking to Kurosawa. I wonder if everything's all right.

In any case, from Kurosawa's response, I'm starting to get embarrassed that I thought the offer was so serious... I'm so bigheaded.

Kurosawa ignores my red face and keeps talking.

"Yes, ma'am, I withdrew easily, but you only told me to 'make contact.' I was never asked to keep pushing him until he joined our

agency. The only reason I attempted at all was because I happen to work for a talent agency where scouting is part of the job.”

“Now you’re just arguing for argument’s sake! If I tell you to make contact with someone, then that would normally imply I want you to scout them, too!”

We students have no idea what to make of all this... I think what the boss is saying is pretty normal. Kurosawa’s the one being abnormal, standing there so brazenly and talking back so bluntly.

“Please think, ma’am. If we pressured him to become a celebrity and it got out, we’d get hauled over the coals, wouldn’t we? Every talent agency is out to bring other agencies down. We shouldn’t give them an opportunity to do that.”

“B-but we’re talking about being famous! Normal kids are usually jumping at the chance!”

“Maybe this time our kid isn’t normal, and *that’s* why we were rejected.”

Huh? Are they calling me weird?

While everyone stands around in shock at Kurosawa’s bluntness, the boss makes a frustrated face as she struggles with the idea of giving up.

At just that moment, a girl approaches from behind her.

“Ma’am, could you please stop forcing the subject with Yuuya?”

“M-Miu?!”

The girl who’s weighing in on Kurosawa and the boss’s predicament is none other than their own model Miu.

“Hey, you got Miu involved, too?! Did you call her here to have her scout Yuuya for us?!”

“She may have, but the fact is Yuuya declined. It’s no good to keep pushing it further.”

“Ugh...”

As Kurosawa nods in agreement with Miu, the boss groans.

“W-wow... Even a star like Miu has come all this way for Yuuya...”

“Y-yeah... I know they did that photo shoot together, but to see her in the flesh is...”

Ryou and the others ignore the argument among the talent agency staff and stare in awe at Miu. It looks like she’s truly a big-name model. There’s no way I would have had the chance to take photos with her before I became like this... I’m so lucky to have been able to work with someone like her.

Just as I start to appreciate my good fortune, the boss makes a face as if she has just had a *Eureka!* moment.

“I-I’ve got it! How about we do a little magazine feature project?”

“Huh?”

“A-a feature?”

Where in the world did that alternative come from?

Ryou and Shingo turn to each other and shake their heads, telling me they're just as confused as I am.

Ignoring our reactions, the boss goes on triumphantly.

"We've released pictures that you took with our Miu in a magazine before. You might not be affiliated with any specific talent agency, but you have dipped your toe in the fame pool, so to speak."

"Wh-wha...?"

"But you *are* still technically a nobody. So why don't we switch up the concept a little?"

"U-uh...I'm not really sure I follow..."

What the heck is going on here? How does this lead to an idea about a magazine feature?

"You're all Ousei Academy students, are you not?"

"Y-yes."

"And Ousei Academy is a school that takes its events like its school festival and sports festival very seriously. The Ball Tournament should be coming up soon, if I remember correctly, shouldn't it?"

"It is...but how did you know?"

"What? It's only natural to research somebody before you scout them, isn't it?"

Huh? Is it? So there went my privacy, I guess.

"Anyway, I digress. I was thinking we could do a huge Ousei Academy feature and cover the Ball Tournament in a magazine. I can already see the headline: 'The Best of the Best! A Sneak Peek at Ousei Academy's Ball Tournament!' What do you think?"

"Huh?!"

I—I mean, I can see her logic, but...

"Uhhh...excuse me, but you're from a talent agency, right? Are magazine features something you can actually do?"

Ryou, who has been listening in, jumps in with a question. I—I guess it's a good one to ask.

"Oh, I wouldn't underestimate us if I were you. These days, you can get anything into a magazine—it doesn't matter if it's celebrity idols, voice actors, or even related to games. We have connections in the publishing industry, too. If we use those, we can get as many features squeezed in as we want."

"It'll be me taking care of those negotiations, though..."

"Of course you will. It's your job."

Even though Kurosawa sounds kind of weary, the boss acts like she hasn't noticed.

"So what do you think? We can cover you without getting you involved in the celebrity world at all, if you want."

"Well..."

It looks like I've been scouted anyway... I'm not sure if I'm happy about it, but I guess one feature can't hurt after I've rejected them. It's not like I can refuse now.

Besides, I feel bad that they came out all this way just for me to turn down their offer... I'm such a piece of crap sometimes, being so wishy-washy and all...

Despite that, I try letting the talent agency boss know what I'm feeling.

"Look...about the magazine feature... As long as it has nothing to do with getting me into the entertainment industry, I'd like to cooperate as much as possible. The thing is, this isn't really for me to decide; it's for the academy..."

I'm not sure if I got my feelings across, but I did my best, and the boss's eyes start to light up.

"That's all I needed to hear! Kurosawa!"

"Yes, ma'am?"

"Make me an appointment with the principal of Ousei Academy right away!"

"That's such a hassle. Why can't you do it?"

"Hey, don't you think it's about time you got some work done?! And don't forget that I'm your superior! At any rate, the principal there seems to be a very reasonable person, so he'll probably give us permission if we tell him that Yuuya is willing to cooperate with us!"

"Sigh... Fine."

Kurosawa walks away in the direction of the academy with an expression that says he really doesn't want to do it. Oh...looks like he's going to do it in person rather than over the phone...

"Yuuya."

"Y-yes?"

"As long as the principal agrees, you *are* happy to help, aren't you?"

"Sure...but like I said earlier, this doesn't mean that I'm going to become a celebrity, and I'm still not sure how to pose well for pictures."

"You don't have to worry about any of that. If you think too much about being in an Ousei Academy feature, then you'll end up acting weird and taking awkward pictures... That said, if my agency releases pictures of you, you'll be set with opportunities for life."

"Huh?"

"Hmm? Oh, it doesn't matter. Anyway, since we have to wait for your principal's permission before we can do anything, let's leave the discussion here for today," the boss says before turning her back to me... "I'll be seeing you soon, then."

Then she leaves.

As she does, Miu makes a face that looks apologetic.

“Yuuya, I’m sorry this turned into such a huge deal. The boss just wanted to meet you so badly...”

“I-it’s fine. Don’t worry about it. Besides, you never know, I might have a change of heart someday...,” I say with confidence, and Miu cracks a relieved smile.

“Thank you for saying that... Anyway, I’d better get going,” Miu says before running off in the same direction as the boss.

After I watch her leave, the others and I face one another.

“...Well, that escalated quickly.”

“Y-yeah. Originally, it was just about Yuuya, but now it involves the whole academy...”

“Yeah... Sorry about that, I guess.”

“There’s no need to apologize! I’m actually getting pretty excited about what kinds of pictures they’ll take.”



“Yeah, I’m looking forward to it, too.”

What started out as something only to do with me blew up to include the entire academy, but I’m glad Ryou and the others are having fun and getting excited about it.

I just wonder what the principal is gonna say...

—In the end, our principal, Tsukasa, is more than happy to host photographers, so it becomes official: Kurosawa’s agency will come to cover the Ball Tournament.

CHAPTER 4

The Rabbit

“Kishaaaah!”

“Night, it’s over there!”

“Woof! *Growl!*”

Right now, we’re in the other world fighting a monster called a Wraith.

It looks kind of like a skeleton-shaped ghost. I don’t do great with horror movies, but it’s not as if ghosts and things petrify me, either, so I’m managing to put up a fight.

Since it’s a ghost and its body is incorporeal, none of my physical attacks affect it. Night’s attacks with his claws and teeth aren’t doing anything to it at all.

Luckily, the Omnisword and the Absolute Spear that the sage left me can deal damage whether or not the monster is a ghost, so it’s no big deal.

Plus, I have some tricks up my sleeve that use my newly expanding magical repertoire to cause damage, too. Night is also getting fully in on the action.

Night is busy manifesting condensed water inside his mouth at the moment, which he blasts out at the Wraith like a laser.

But the Wraith knows that magic will damage it and dodges the attack just in time.

“I’m here, too!”

“Gishaaa?!”

Having dodged Night’s attack, the Wraith has let down its guard. As I get closer, I take aim at its neck and swing the Omnisword.

It slices the Wraith’s head clean off without a trace of resistance.

Then the Wraith dissolves into motes of light and disappears.
“Phew... I guess I’m still not used to wielding magic in a fight.”
“Woof.”

Since Night could tell that his physical attacks wouldn’t do anything and decided to use magic instead, there wasn’t too much of a problem. But I still barely have any experience synchronizing magical attacks with the Omnisword and other weapons.

Whatever I try, I still end up using only one style of attack or the other.

In any case, I decide that it’s probably better to mull over these kinds of things somewhere nice and quiet, like at home, and turn my attention to picking up any drop items. But the only item left behind is an S-rank Magic Stone.

“Huh? I work hard to bring down a Wraith, and all I get is a Magic Stone...? I mean, I guess it would be weird for a ghost to be carrying something bigger, but I’m still surprised.”

“Woof...”

I look up at the sky, feeling disappointed.

Right now, I’m trying to get as much battle experience as I can in this world by picking fights with things like Wraiths.

My training back on Earth for the Ball Tournament is going really well, but I have to go to the capital in this world as soon as possible, so I’m training here, too, just in case something happens during my visit.

I’ve gotten much more used to fighting with the Omnisword and the Absolute Spear than before, but I still find it hard using magic simultaneously, so that’s what Night and I are working to improve.

After school finished today, I did all the prep for tomorrow’s classes at home and went on a walk prior to coming here. I’ve been here for so long now that before I know it, the sky darkens and covers the land in a blanket of stars.

“...The night sky is so beautiful in this world. The stars look so close...”

“Woof.”

Night is probably used to seeing this sky every day, but to a newcomer like me, it’s gorgeous. It’s something that mankind back on Earth sacrificed in exchange for all the conveniences we have now.

“.....”

As I stare up at the sky, I suddenly think back on past fights I’ve had.

“I wonder if I can even get any stronger than this on my own...”

“Woof?”

Night tilts his head, confused by my murmurings.

In today’s battle with the Wraith, I only did damage with magic, but

I just can't figure out how to use my weapons and magic together effectively. When I really think about it, all my magic abilities come from the sage, and my weapon skills are all self-taught from books and stuff.

...Maybe I need a proper teacher.

As I continue to think about what I need to do, I decide to carry on exploring for a little bit longer before turning in for the night, seeing as I have school tomorrow.

This is something I've thought since the day I last saw Lexia and the others, but since I'm definitely going to be visiting the royal palace, I should try to learn how to do things properly. That's why I've started strength and muscle training as well as battle training. Plus, I want to be confident enough to protect Night and Akatsuki wherever I go without any problems.

The next time I see Lexia and Luna, I want to show them that I've grown. Since I had to put off my visit to the capital, I at least want to try my hardest in that respect.

Lately, I haven't been progressing as much as I want to near my house, so I've been taking Night and Akatsuki deeper into the forest.

"Huh? It feels different here somehow..."

"Woof?"

After leaving my house and heading far into the woods, I feel the atmosphere around me become strange.

More specifically, the look of the trees has completely changed.

Up until this point, the trees have all looked normal, but since we arrived here, we've been surrounded by charcoal-colored trees with jet-black leaves. What the hell are these things?

Black Ironwood—An extremely hard, black-colored tree. Not only are run-of-the-mill strikes or attacks unable to fell these trees, but they don't even leave superficial scratches or marks. The areas where these trees grow are a mystery, so they fetch extremely high prices at auction as a raw material. Black Ironwoods can only be cut down using elven spirit magic or secret techniques passed down through the dwarves.

Wow, that sounds amazing.

But what amazes me more is that the message says the areas where these trees grow are a mystery, so much so that the wood is ridiculously valuable. But right now I'm surrounded by them. What's going on here?

I guess the only people who can make it this far into the woods are people like the sage, so it's not so weird that the location of the groves where the trees grow remains a mystery. And going by the levels of

the monsters I've encountered here, it probably wouldn't be worth it to come and cut down these trees anyway. I'm sure that making a house out of such sturdy timber would leave me feeling nice and secure, but you could still make a great house even without this wood.

And then there's the fact that the trees can only be cut down with elven (?) and dwarven (?) methods, making it even more precious.

"Night. Akatsuki. I know we've been careful on the way here, but things could get even more dangerous, so be on high alert, okay?"

"Woof."

"Oink."

The two animals reply softly.

Hmm... I know I can't cut down these trees, but could they spell trouble for us?

I have no idea what their effect on a fight would be. What if I took a hit somewhere and was thrown back against one? I'd probably take huge amounts of damage.

I've activated my One with Nature skill and am proceeding with caution into the forest when I spot the first monster of the day.

If I had to explain it in terms of the animals from my world, it would be similar to a wild boar.

Except that it's the size of a truck and has two sharp tusks jutting out of its lower jaw.

Its body also glows silvery-white, and I can't see any fur on it at all.

At first glance, it does like look a wild boar, but...what's with this thing?

I immediately activate my Identify skill.

Mithril Boar

Level: 10, **Mana:** 1000, **Attack:** 40000, **Defense:** 50000,

Agility: 30000, **Intelligence:** 2000, **Luck:** 500

Skills: Charge, Iron Wall, Reflect, Super Smell

Hang on a sec.

What's with these stats?! It has 50,000 defense at level 10? And 40,000 in attack?!

Plus, it has the Reflect skill... Does that mean magic attacks won't work on it?!

Its name contains the word *mithril*, too... What does that mean?

While I'm still busy gawping at the monster's ridiculous stats, the Mithril Boar suddenly begins to furiously sniff with its nose.

As I tilt my head cautiously in curiosity, the Mithril Boar, which shouldn't have been able to sense us until now, suddenly looks right at me!

How did it know I'm here?! ...Could it have been that Super Smell skill?!

“Huh?!”

“Woof?!”

“Oink!”

While I’m still in shock that we’ve been busted, an even bigger surprise is headed our way.

The moment the Mithril Boar takes a step forward, it starts to charge us at frightening speed.

Even though it didn’t have a run-up, the powerful charge of the Mithril Boar is upon us before we even have time to react.

I haven’t even processed that it’s attacking, but it’s already right in front of my eyes.

I don’t have the time to dodge, and I’m instead blown backward with incredible force.

That force sends me hurtling backfirst into a Black Ironwood, stopping me in midair.

“Gah! Ah!”

“W-woof!”

“Oink!”

“S-stay there!”

Night and Akatsuki begin to run over to me, but I stop them.

Because—

“Oiiiiink!”

Akatsuki lets out a squeal louder than anything I’ve ever heard before.

And once again the Mithril Boar sends me flying with ease.

“Guh?!”

I’m a little more prepared for the second impact, but the force is still so overpowering that it goes straight through my armor and radiates throughout my entire body.

I somehow manage to find an opening and quickly guzzle down an Herb of Complete Healing Juice, but...I can’t stop this cold sweat.

Because I still can’t see the Mithril Boar’s attacks coming.

By the time I realize, I’m already flying through the air.

Just now I’ve been able to get in a defensive position, and I have an Herb of Complete Healing Juice, so I’m okay, but this isn’t going to last forever. If I mess up my defense, there’s not going to be enough time for me to heal myself, and it’ll all be over.

I might now be able to fight the monsters near my house without any problems, but...I had no idea I’d run into a monster as strong as this...!

Now that I can defeat S-class monsters, I mistakenly thought I’d be fine in this forest, but that was just my ego talking. I’ve become so arrogant.

I don’t even have any stats that go over 10,000 yet.

It just brings it all home that I was probably only able to cross swords with S-class monsters because of the sage's weapons.

At this rate, I-I'll...

"...Night. Akatsuki. Get out of here."

"Woof?!"

"Oink!"

Both Night and Akatsuki sound surprised and shake their heads.

I can't get the two of you wrapped up in my mistake, too. This is all because I got bigheaded and misunderstood the gulf between our power levels.

I can't die just yet, though... I have to give you a chance to escape.

As my heart breaks in two, I desperately search out the Mithril Boar, when—

"I'll save you."

"Huh?"

Boom!

A force vibrates the very air hard enough to resonate through the pit of my stomach.

Then, somehow, I catch a glimpse of the source of the sound.

Something white and around the same size as Night and Akatsuki knocks the Mithril Boar right onto its side.

After the creature that has suddenly appeared smacks into the Mithril Boar, it does several spins in midair and lands gracefully on the ground.

It looks like a—

"A-a rabbit?"

"That's right, I am a rabbit."

It's a cute bunny rabbit.

The pure-white bunny glances at us and then turns back to the Mithril Boar.

I follow the rabbit's stare and find the Mithril Boar spurting blood from its huge nose and mouth and going berserk.

"Oink, oiiiiiiink!"

"Oh?"

Without breaking a sweat, the rabbit stands tiptoe on one leg and slowly raises the other.

And then—

"Quiet you."

Boom!

Once again, the air trembles throughout the entire forest.

I have no idea what's happening, but when I look back toward where the Mithril Boar was standing, all I can see splattered around are blood and guts. There's nothing else left.

Even the Black Ironwoods, which were said to be so hard that run-

of-the-mill impacts and attacks would leave no marks, are lying cracked and broken where they landed for hundreds of meters around us, and the ground is broken and hollow where the roots used to be, like something had gouged the tree right out of the earth.

Night and I stare at the scene before us in shock.

“Small fry.”

Unlike us, the rabbit simply snorts and stands there looking satisfied.

“Now, then...”

“Huh?!”

The white rabbit turns its attention toward us.

There’s something I don’t understand. Why does the rabbit’s voice sound like it’s disembodied somehow? It’s as if it overlays an ordinary animal cry and doesn’t really fit the outward appearance of the rabbit. It’s a low, smooth voice. It’s actually kinda nice.

There’s a lot of weird stuff going on here...

Night and I wearily look toward the rabbit.

...I wonder...if this rabbit...is an enemy...

If it is, we don’t stand a chance.

I couldn’t do anything to that Mithril Boar, but this rabbit slaughtered it in the blink of an eye...

Unlike the composed rabbit, the others and I are staring back at it on high alert.

Wanting to know something—anything—about this animal, I activate my Identify skill.

“Field Guide skill acquired. Your **Identify** skill has also been upgraded.”

“Whoa!”

“Hmm?”

As soon as I activate my skill, a message box appears, and I unintentionally gasp.

“Uh-oh!” I think, desperately clapping my hand to my mouth. But all the rabbit does is look at me confused. It doesn’t try to attack at all.

...Well, I guess, going by the dead Mithril Boar in front of me, it doesn’t matter how on my toes I am. I’d be dead before I knew it if the rabbit was going to attack me.

I want to check out my new skill and how much it’s been upgraded, but now’s not the time.

I swallow my surprise at the sudden message and once again try to peek at the rabbit’s stats.

King Rabbit

Level: 4, **Mana:** 10, **Attack:** 500000, **Defense:** 10, **Agility:** 500000, **Intelligence:** 500000, **Luck:** 500000

Species Skills: Bunny Kick (R): M, Bunny Ears (R): M

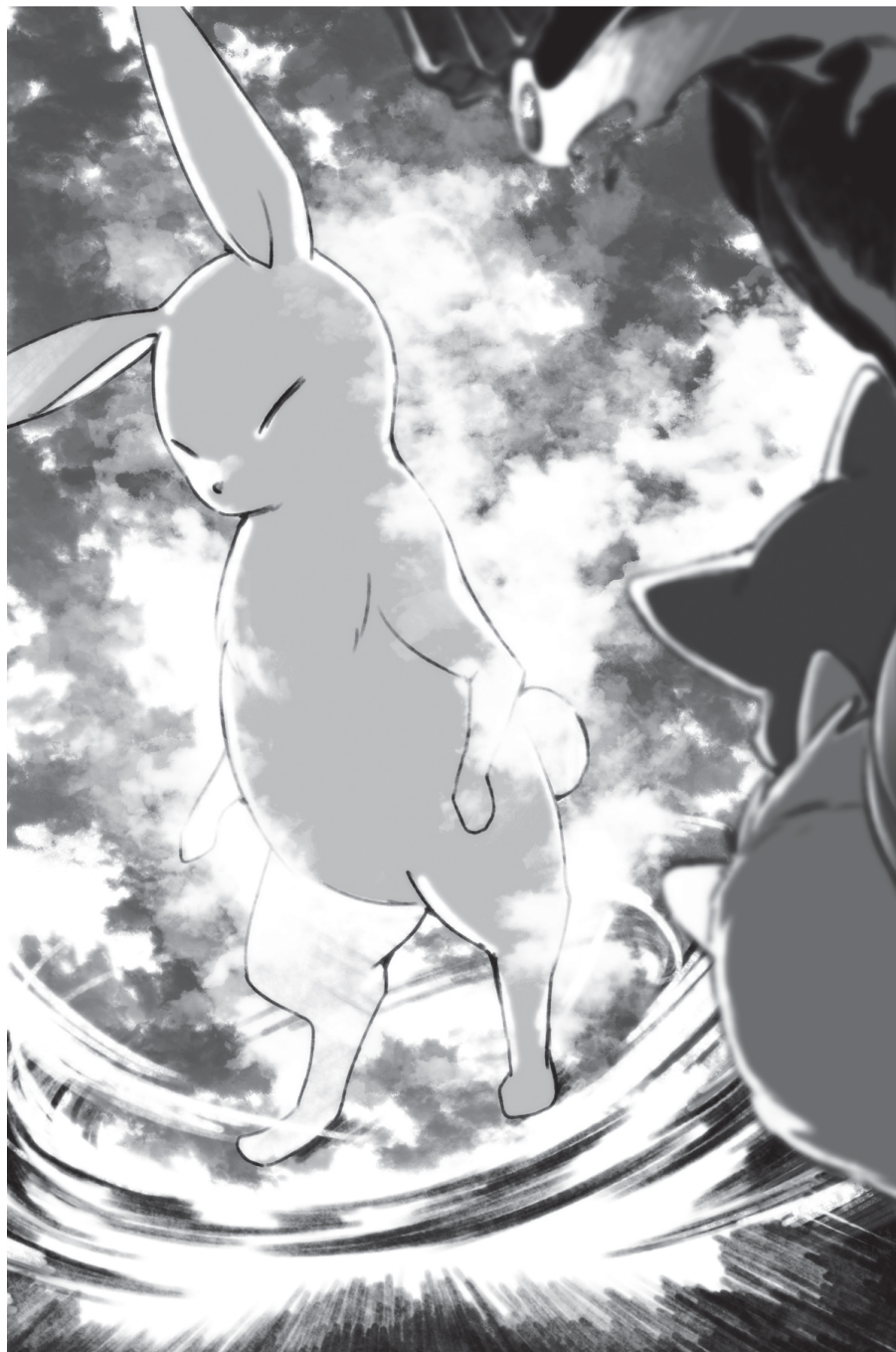
Unique Skills: Holy Kick (U): M, Holy Ears (U): M

Fighting Skills: Battle Mana (SSR): M, Bite (N), Body Slam (N)

Regular Skills: Charm (R), Detect Presence (R), Detect Mana (SR), Mind's Eye (SR)

Titles: Deity of Kicks, Deity of Ears, Double Deity, Wandering Rabbit, Sweet Reaper

HOOOOLY SHIT!



Besides that, I'm suddenly seeing a lot more info than before... I guess this is all due to the upgrade.

That's why I can see how stacked this rabbit's stats and abilities really are.

How come all its stats besides mana and defense are 500,000, but it's only level 4?!

It has a crazy number of skills and a lot of titles that I'd like to ask it more about, too...

The rabbit begins preening itself, totally ignoring my astonishment, and then turns to look in my direction.

...Huh? Does this rabbit know I'm using a skill on it?

It shows no sign of intending to run away. It's almost as if it's sitting there, saying *Well, get on with it, then.*

I don't know what this rabbit wants with us, but I'm grateful it saved us all the same, and I start to check my latest upgrades.

First is my upgraded Identify skill. After using my new skill on the rabbit, I can now see a lot more information.

Skills are now categorized, and I can even see their level.

If I had to guess, it looks like the rareness of a skill is determined by its difficulty to acquire and its acquisition rate, and the rabbit has a couple that are marked as R for Rare, N for Normal, or U for Unique, which is presumably the highest level of rarity there is.

I also see an M to indicate Mastered next to each skill. I guess that one's pretty self-explanatory. It's probably just to show that the skill is mastered.

My upgraded Identify skill isn't the only thing that's useful. My new Field Guide skill also looks like it'll come in handy.

Not only does it record the items I've harvested and picked up after each battle, as well as what monsters I've defeated, it also keeps details of where each monster lives and what items they drop.

Even better is that I can add monsters to the record even if I haven't actually fought them in battle, like if I've come across them in a book or something instead.

It also lists the special traits and weak points of these monsters, so the more knowledge I gain, the more useful it'll become. This is a really awesome skill to have.

—Now then, time to stop looking at my own skills. Let's have a more in-depth look at the ones that rabbit has.

Normally, it would be pretty dangerous to hang around here for too long, but I sense living things scattering as soon as the rabbit catches wind of them through the trees and bushes, so as long as the rabbit is with us, it's probably safe. You're amazing, Rabbit.

Bunny Kick—A kick-based attack that can be acquired by rabbit-type monsters and species.

Bunny Ears—An ear-based attack that can be acquired by rabbit-type monsters and species.

Holy Kick—Can be used only by those who have mastered kicks. The kick is so powerful that it can shatter stars.

Holy Ears—Can be used only by those who have mastered ears. These ears hear all.

Battle Mana—The user's body is coated in mana to make attacks more powerful. A state first achieved when you become a master.

Detect Presence—Can detect the presence of others nearby.

Detect Mana—Can detect the flow of mana.

Mind's Eye—The ultimate form of the Dodge skill. Can even detect the activation of the skills of others.

Hmm, I'm not sure I understand.

All these skills sound so confusing that they're making me dizzy.

The one thing I think I do understand is that the rabbit's Mind's Eye skill is probably why it could tell I was using Identify. But that's it. Everything else is just whooshing over my head.

Deity of Kicks—Bestowed to those who have perfectly mastered the art of kicking. The kicks of those who achieve this title are godlike in their strength.

Deity of Ears—Bestowed to those who have perfectly mastered the art of hearing. The hearing of those who achieve this title is godlike in its precision.

Double Deity—Bestowed to those who acquire two Deity titles. Holders stand on equal footing to the gods in two fields.

Wandering Rabbit—A rabbit on a warrior's pilgrimage.

Sweet Reaper—One who, despite their cute and cuddly appearance, brings death swiftly to their enemies.

There's just too much to take in.

What the hell is this rabbit's deal? It's mastered kicking... I mean, I guess after seeing its monstrous strength firsthand, I'd agree with that. But to be godlike? Huh? Do these "Deity" prefixes mean it's really on a god-tier level? That's absurd!

And what's this about its ears? Are its ears as good as its kicking, then? Does this mean it was just toying with the Mithril Boar that it killed? Does it use its ears as well when it gets serious? Does anything exist that can beat this thing? And what even is godlike hearing?

As my mind flits between this thought and that, a message containing some more facts about the rabbit suddenly pops up. It

looks like my Field Guide skill has been activated.

King Rabbit—A mutation of the fighting-type Fighter Rabbit. This species is unique in that it has mastered the art of kicking to perfection. Its ears are just as lethal as its kicks, and there are no enemies that can go toe to toe with this monster.

“Okay, that’s enough.”

“Hmm?”

After reading a whole explanation that centers around a cartoonish battle species, I decide I’m done for today. I’ve had enough.

It took a while, but I’ve read through everything I wanted to know, so I turn back toward the rabbit. When I call out to it, the rabbit tilts its head, as if asking *Are you done?* and I nod in response.

That’s when the rabbit suddenly stands tall and skillfully points at me with one of its ears.

“Hey, you. Show me how you kick.”

“Uhhh, what...?”

There’s a lot to unpack here, but for some reason, the rabbit is asking me to do a kick.

As I try to understand why a monster that I’ve just discovered is more or less a god of kicking is asking me to show it my own, Akatsuki, who has been watching quietly until now, suddenly steps out in front of me. A-Akatsuki?

“Oink. Oink, oink.”

“You ask me to allow you to show me? Very well.”

The rabbit isn’t sympathetic to Akatsuki at all as it curiously orders him to perform a kick. Akatsuki begins to move his short, stubby legs adorably.

“Oink! Oink!”

“Trivial.”

“Oi-oink?! ”

Akatsuki reacts with shock at the point-blank put-down and immediately sinks into depression. I-it’s okay, Akatsuki.

“Woof! Woof, woof!”

“You wish to show me, too? Be my guest.”

“Woof!”

This time it’s Night’s turn, and unlike Akatsuki, he demonstrates a fierce kick.

After seeing Night’s attempt, the rabbit nods with satisfaction.

“You have a long way to go, but I see some potential.”

F-for some reason, the rabbit approves of Night. I-it’s still okay, Akatsuki.

I’m not really sure what we’re doing here. The rabbit already saw and critiqued both Night’s and Akatsuki’s kicks...so is it just going to

do the same to me?

I still don't know why I'm even doing this, but the rabbit is staring at me expectantly now like it's my turn, so I do a kick, too. If a god of kicks wants to tell me what I'm doing wrong, I might as well take it up on its offer.

"Hyah!"

I feel like I did a pretty good kick actually. The rabbit nods several times.

"Hmm, I see... Your technique may be poor for now, but I saw a glimpse of talent in there."

After the rabbit dexterously moves its ears to make a motion as if it's thinking about something, it points one in my direction again and lifts one foot slowly, like it's telling me to watch.

"Hmph."

Boom!

The bang echoes all around us.

When I look more closely, there's a small hole in the trunk of the Black Ironwood where the rabbit's kick was pointing.

But it doesn't stop there. It isn't just one hole in one tree, but dozens of holes in dozens of trees stretching back in one long, straight line.

...What just happened...?

All I ever saw was the rabbit lift its foot.

Then a boom and one long hole through the forest.

"Do it," the rabbit urges, ignoring my surprise.

I try to find a way to replicate the ferocity of the kick that was too fast for me to even see, but the rabbit criticizes every single attempt.

As I try and try, the rabbit uses its pure-white ears to correct me, pointing out when I don't raise my leg properly or when I kick strangely.

The rabbit also demonstrates some other kicks as slow as it possibly can, and little by little, the ferocity of my kicks begins to improve.

While I continue to drill kicks, a few monsters try to attack us, but the rabbit easily gets rid of them all, so I can concentrate on my training in peace.

Night and Akatsuki try to practice alongside me by copying what I do, but Akatsuki is quickly told by the rabbit that he's not very good and it's time to quit, leaving the poor piglet quietly sobbing. Oh, Akatsuki... Your skill set isn't designed for battle in the first place. You shouldn't take it to heart.

Once it feels like a few hours have passed, the rabbit nods.

"Good. Why don't you try to kick that tree?"

"Huh? But what if it's still too early in my training to...?"

"You'll be fine. Show me."

Egged on by the rabbit, I try to channel everything I've learned in

the past few hours and kick the Black Ironwood in front of me with all my might.

Then...the tree snaps.

“A-are you serious...?”

“This is but a natural result of my training.”

The rabbit has a completely different reaction to the snapped tree trunk. I stand there in awe, but the rabbit just nods like it’s a job well done.

“Now, to put your training into practice.”

“Huh?!”

It takes me a while to process what the rabbit is suggesting.

I-into practice? Does...that mean...?

Feeling a strange sense of foreboding, I ask the rabbit a question.

“And...I’ll be fighting against...?”

“Me, of course.”

“I thought so, but...how?!”

I might be able to snap a Black Ironwood now, but...how the hell could I possibly take on a rabbit that can kick a hole through a whole forest of them in a single blow?!

Despite my heart protesting that I know I can’t beat it, the rabbit is relentless.

“You can do it. You will do it.”

“Are you telling me that if there’s a will, there’s a way...?”

“If you have time to incessantly complain, then you have time to get moving. Here I come.”

“Hey! Hold on!”

Ignoring my panicked pleas, the rabbit charges me with frightening speed.

It’s going so fast that even my eyes can’t keep up with it despite all the leveling up I’ve done here.

The rabbit maintains the same momentum as it spins and launches a kick right at me.

With no time to prepare a weapon, I manage to defend myself swiftly with my own kick.

But the rabbit’s attack is way too strong, and immediately my leg is screaming in agony.

“Youch!”

“Hmph. That was a decent block. This time, you’ll attack with that kick instead!”

Since the rabbit is giving me permission, I switch away from defense and return its kick with my other foot.

“I’m gonna give it all I’ve got!”

“Good. That’s it.”

We continue training as the rabbit critiques my kicks in real time

and corrects them during battle.

“Woof...”

“Oink...”

As they watch us fight, Akatsuki looks idly on, while Night watches the rabbit's movements intently so that he can remember them for later.

Eventually, after a lot of blood, sweat, and tears, the training session comes to an end.

By the conclusion of the last battle, I'm fighting so desperately that I don't even have time to think, and the instant it ends, I feel a wave of exhaustion crash over me before I sink into a heap on the ground.

It's the first time I've been this drained after leveling up in this world, and while I am surprised about that, it also feels refreshing.

When it sees my fatigue, the rabbit nods contentedly.

“Good... We stop here for today. We shall continue tomorrow at your abode, so do not forget that I'm coming!”

The rabbit's ears whip around and point straight at me. Huh, so...it's coming back tomorrow as well?! But today was hard enough as it is!

The rabbit doesn't even register my reaction as it stands there with a matter-of-fact face that tells me that's exactly what's going to happen. S-seriously...

Then—

“Farewell.”

The rabbit says good-bye and kicks the ground with a thump.

The force of the kick is enough to send the rabbit dozens of meters up in the air, then something else even more unbelievable happens.

“Hmph.”

The rabbit uses the empty air as a foothold and flies into the sky at an astounding speed!

The raw power from the kickoff is so huge that it sends a shock wave that violently shakes the forest below before hitting me.

“Argh?!”

Somehow, I manage to withstand the blustering gale, but the rabbit is no longer in the sky.

As I stand dumbfounded by the absolute force of nature I just met, a message suddenly appears in front of me.

Apprentice of the Deity of Kicks title acquired.

It looks like the rabbit is my master now.

...

“...Shall we go home, then?”

“Woof.”

“.....Oink.”

Today was a pretty darn tiring day.

"I am here."

"You really came..."

The day after I become the rabbit's apprentice, the rabbit visits my house as if it's the most normal thing in the world. Somehow, he's even managed to get into the garden all by himself.

No monster has ever been able to breach the sage's garden before, but Master Rabbit hasn't even broken a sweat getting in... Could this mean he isn't actually a monster?

Or could it be that he just forced his way in because he could anyway?

"Woof, woof!"

"Oink."

I still don't really understand the deal with this rabbit, but Night looks really excited to see our visitor, and Akatsuki is still sulking with contempt for my new master. Oh, Akatsuki. You don't have to be that upset...

As I try to placate Akatsuki, the rabbit looks over the sage's house and garden with a curious expression.

"What is this...place? The magic used here is even stronger than that of the Deity of Mana..."

"Huh?"

"...It matters not. Today—"

"E-excuse me!"

"Hmm?"

It looks like we're about to start training again, so I just have to say something first.

"Why are you, errr...teaching...me how to kick?" I blurt out, still having no clue as to how any of this started.

The rabbit's answer is equally confusing.

"Because I have selected you to be my successor."

"A successor? You chose me?!"

What the...? Since when did he see me as a successor?! Although after he suddenly appointed me as his apprentice, I guess this is just the next step up.

"That's correct. Those of us who are titled as Deities have a duty to train a successor. I just happened to discover you in this perilous place and thought you may be a good fit."

"Deities? And you have to train a successor...? I still don't get it..."

"Woof."

"Oink."

Both Night and Akatsuki tilt their heads, obviously never having heard of anything Master Rabbit is talking about.

Master Rabbit seems a little taken aback.

"Do you...not know what a Deity is?"

“N-no.”

“Woof.”

“Oink.”

“I see... Animals that bear the title Deity are revered by humankind as Divine Beasts... I take it, then, that you know nothing of Demons, either?”

“D-Demons?”

“Oh, I see.”

Master Rabbit sighs and begins to speak in a serious tone.

“There are others in this world who bear the same Deity title as I. These titles are bestowed by the planet to those who master certain fields.”

“A title...bestowed by the planet?”

I thought titles were just something that this world granted on a whim...

The number of questions I want to ask keeps growing, but I want to hear more about the Deities, so I encourage the rabbit to keep talking.

“You are probably wondering why the planet bestows such titles. The best way to understand this system is to think of it as the planet’s self-purification function.”

“Self-purification?”

“That is correct. Self-purification against the Demons. These Demons are a crystallized manifestation of the darkness of all the world’s creatures that has been given life.”

“The darkness of the world’s creatures?!?”

This is all so fantastical and abstract...I don’t understand.

My head hurts just thinking about it all. I would never have to deal with this kind of thing on Earth.

“The Demons are a crystallization of our negativity. And it’s for that reason the only thing they can do is harm. Those of us who have been named Deity exist to protect creatures from such suffering.”

“Oh...”

So does that make Master Rabbit a superhero or something in this world? I don’t know—I don’t exactly have much to reference here in that respect.

“At the very least, do you now understand what I am?”

“K-kind of... But when you talked about me being your successor, is that an offer I’m free to decline?”

“If you so wish.”

“Oh, so I can...”

I thought I wouldn’t be allowed to say no, so that’s a relief. I’m glad he said that. What could he have possibly expected by dumping this responsibility on my shoulders even though I have no idea what’s going on?

“I believe you are beginning to understand, but if one is bestowed with the title of Deity, they are also given the duty to fight the Demons. Which

are very hard-won fights, I'm afraid. If entered half-heartedly or without proper training, certain death is sure to follow. This is why I have selected you as my potential successor. In you, there is a potential with such depths that even I cannot begin to fathom. I believe you are one of the few who could successfully oppose the Demons..."

"I see... But if I were to receive the Deity title, would there be any benefits? Or would I just be fighting Demons out of duty?"

"I cannot say whether there are any benefits, but when we fight Demons, our Deity stats more than double in strength. Additionally, and I know not whether you will deem this good or bad, but those who have Deity titles reign at the tops of their fields. Yet this world has determined such power is to be wielded against the Demons alone. So when you fight an enemy who is not a Demon, your stats are cut in half. Although, I daresay there will still be few enemies who would pose a challenge to a Deity even in that state."

"Woof..."

"Oink."

What Master Rabbit is saying really underlines the gulf between our skill levels, and I stand there frozen in awe at the creature.

So that must mean...when I used my Identify skill on him, the rabbit's stats were already halved...?!

Yet he was still strong enough to take out a Mithril Boar?!

I'm so astounded that I'm shocked into complete silence.

"Now, then... While I have spoken at length on the topic, I will not force you to bear the title of Deity if you do not wish to. Still, if I train you and you become more powerful, perhaps less blood will still be spilled. You could perhaps also take care of things in a way that we Deities are not capable of."

I still don't know what these supposed Demons look like or what kind of skills they might have, but if what the rabbit says is true and the skills of the Demons affect the stats of the Deities when they fight, then maybe I can be of some use even if I don't inherit the actual title.

"So what do you say? Will you succeed me as Deity?"

"Uhhh...I think I'm okay for now."

I don't feel ready for such an important job at the moment. Besides, I'm from Earth. If for some reason I could no longer come here anymore, I would leave this world weakened, and I don't want that to happen.

"Hmph... I see. Fine, but I will still train you."

"But, uh...why me?"

"I told you, did I not? Because of your potential...and because I feel like it."

"But training me won't benefit you... Why not find someone more worthy and spend your time on them instead?"

“...Because I want to train you. Boy, don’t be so damn humble!”

The rabbit sighs in disbelief before he starts to glance around my house again, just as he did when he got here.

“...Yes, that could work.”

“What?”

“If you’re so opposed to the idea of me training you for free, why don’t you return the favor by teaching me magic?”

“Huh?!”

As I stand frozen by yet another unexpected request, the rabbit continues talking.

“You know, I was struck the moment I arrived here, for I’ve never seen a magical barrier so extraordinary. As I visit you with neither good nor bad intention in my heart, I was able to pass through, but...I suspect that if I were to act the least bit hostile, the barrier would reject me, and no matter the number of times I attacked it, I doubt I would be able to leave a single scratch. I have to say, I never believed that someone capable of creating such an incredible barrier existed. You’d have to be on the same level as a Demon to achieve a feat like this...although I realize you are different.”

The sage never fails to amaze.

It’s incredible that Master Rabbit, who has not one but two Deity titles to indicate that he’s the master of his field and who slays powerful monsters at half strength with ease, is this impressed.

“As you may have guessed, there is a Deity of Mana, one who has mastered the use of mana...or so I had thought until I came across you... and my assumption immediately crumbled to dust. What surprises me most of all is that you have managed to remain anonymous until now...”

That’s because I’m from another world. I usually live on Earth.

“In any case, let us return to the original point. If you dislike the idea of you solely learning from me, then teach me how to cast this extraordinary magic in return. If we teach each other, that will solve this dilemma.”

“So...can you use magic at the moment, Master Rabbit?”

“I’ve seen such skills in practice before, but I cannot use magic at all at present.”

“You seem so strong, but...”

Even if his ear and kicking techniques may be amazing, his use and understanding of magic isn’t very good at all.

Am I really the person to teach him, though?

When it comes down to it, all I did was find the sage’s book and inherit his mana pathways and theories.

I don’t think I’m in a position to lecture anyone on the subject.

...Still, I would love to be able to kick just like the rabbit. After what happened yesterday, it looks like it’s still possible to come across creatures that I can’t defeat yet. So the more ways I have to fight something like that, the better.

I nod and hold my hand out toward Master Rabbit.

“Well...I’m not sure how much I can teach you, but I’d love to take you up on your offer.”

“Very well.”

To be fair, I may not completely comprehend magical theory myself. But I know I can teach it, so hopefully this will go a little better than I was originally expecting.

“Now that we are in such an arrangement...I suppose it would be very strange to continue calling me the master and you the apprentice.”

“I—I guess so.”

I haven’t really been thinking about it, but this makes me, the apprentice of Master Rabbit, who is a Divine Beast—a master, too.

“And thus, we’ve become each other’s master and apprentice. Now, I don’t have a name, but perhaps it would be best for you to tell me yours.”

“Oh, I’m Yuuya. And this is Night and Akatsuki.”

“Woof.”

“Oink.”

Night lifts his front paw and Akatsuki raises his hoof to wave at the rabbit, who nods in return.

After discussing what we can teach each other, Master Rabbit and I decide that it’s time to go on the hunt for a monster to be the subject of our new kicking and magic training regimen.

I wonder if there’s anything interesting around here.

The rabbit and Yuuya had yet to meet.

In fact, the rabbit had just entered the Weald—a place he almost never visited.

For this rabbit, it wasn’t due to the usual fear of not being strong enough to survive the hordes of powerful monsters that roamed the place that kept him away. He’d simply never entered.

But for some reason, he entered the forest that day.

...Whatever is the matter with me? Normally, I don’t care to come to places like this, but...

With the confidence of one bearing a Deity title, the rabbit headed into the Weald without trepidation.

And then the rabbit’s sensitive ears picked up a faint sound.

Hmm? Monsters fighting over territory again?

Intrigued by the sound of a fight featuring monsters he couldn’t identify by ear alone, the rabbit headed in the direction of the source.

Then...

What? A human?!

He was confronted with a grisly battle scene between a Mithril Boar—a strong opponent even for this part of the forest—and Yuuya.

...This is not much of a battle. The Mithril Boar has yet to even take

damage...

Just as the rabbit saw, Yuuya's attacks didn't affect the Mithril Boar at all.

The monster was clad in a rare material called Mithril, lending it unrivaled strength against magical attacks and incredible resistance against physical attacks. It could hardly be expected of something like a human to inflict even the smallest of scratches upon it.

What also made Mithril Boars dangerous was their incredible defense and speed stats, which it utilized in charges, hurling its gigantic body at its enemies.

Any normal human would have been smashed to smithereens after taking a hit like that, but...

What?!

Yuuya may have been sent flying, but he was still in one piece. Still alive.

Unable to hide his surprise, the rabbit received yet another shock as Night jumped into the fray as well.

That young wolf... He's but a pup, yet I can see such strength and potential. And the piglet... He may not be battle-oriented, but still...

As the rabbit turned his attention back to Yuuya, he became nervous.

...That human is the one I cannot read. Or rather...I can't see how far his potential goes.

The rabbit easily estimated Night's and Akatsuki's strengths. Although it was just a preliminary look, the rabbit knew that both of them had the capacity to grow and develop in a number of ways.

But when it came to Yuuya, even a rabbit bestowed with the title of Deity couldn't see the full extent of his abilities.

But how could anyone other than one of us Deities have so much untapped strength...?

The rabbit felt two things about Yuuya: fear—and happiness.

What if I were to train him?

The rabbit had two Deity titles, including the Deity of Ears and the Deity of Kicks, but there was no way he could teach humans anything that required bunny ears.

The rabbit's kicks, however—he prided himself on having the strongest in this world—were a different story altogether.

If possible, the rabbit wanted Yuuya to succeed him as the Deity of Kicks, but more importantly than that, he was more excited to try teaching some of his techniques to this boy with unfathomable potential.

The rabbit had always been of the opinion that he mustn't give out the secrets to his methods so easily.

There was always the possibility that he would teach them to

someone who would abuse that knowledge.

That was why he was determined that the one he chose to inherit his title would be virtuous.

As the rabbit reflected on the irritating constraints of his Deity title, Yuuya and the others seemed to have realized that the odds were completely against them and were trying to escape from the battle.

But the Mithril Boar wouldn't let them. It was already gearing up for its next attack.

In that moment, when Yuuya resolved to fight the Mithril Boar alone and sacrifice himself for the sake of his friends, the rabbit saw Yuuya finally slot perfectly into the mold of the successor he wanted.

The rabbit had never intended to just watch them die, but now was the time to step in and save them.

—And thus, the rabbit acquired himself a student. Little did he know that as soon as he saw the great barrier surrounding the boy's home and witnessed his magical talent, which surpassed even the Deity of Mana, that the master would become the apprentice.

CHAPTER 5

Evolution

Since my master became my own apprentice, I've continued to train by watching and learning from the rabbit in the hope that one day I, too, will master kicking. In exchange, I've been teaching him magic.

As I teach my master the magic I inherited from the sage, it comes as a surprise to learn that the sage's magic even surpasses that of the Deity of Mana, another entity like the rabbit who boasts the title of Deity for mastering their field. Even though he's gone, the sage still manages to amaze.

I suppose he was looked upon as a man among gods when he was alive, so I shouldn't be too surprised, I guess.

In any case, while I've been working hard to teach the sage's magic as best I can to the rabbit, I feel a renewed appreciation for the mana pathways the sage left me.

It seems as though the rabbit has trouble conjuring magic in the exact way he envisions.

I must have been naive to think that magic was something anybody could learn with enough practice.

Although it seems to be an accepted fact in this world that if you don't study the necessary theory behind how to control and activate magic as a live-in apprentice under the tutelage of a distinguished wizard, then it's quite hard to advance any further.

Yet it seems to be the norm for wizards to treat the theories they discovered themselves as their property and keep them concealed from others.

I used to imagine that they were like the scientists of my world, who always publish their findings for others to see and scrutinize, but

apparently not. Perhaps it's more apt to compare them to something like commercial technology.

Since it's so difficult to get someone to teach you magical theory in the first place before trying to comprehend it, it's no wonder that wizards who can control and manipulate mana properly are so rare.

...There was that one soldier who performed what looked like healing magic on Lexia before, but maybe he was part of some sort of special unit.

When I think about magic in that way, it makes me feel like the monsters I face truly are amazing—they can naturally utilize their magic to their advantage in battle, whether the enemy is near or far. It's something I still find difficult.

By the sound of it, the rabbit seems to have sought the magical teachings of the Deity of Mana at one point, but he was still unable to learn it properly.

That made me doubt if my training would even help him at all, but the sage's magical theories seem to be pretty easy to understand, and now that the rabbit is happy about being able to use magic better than ever before, I can relax a little.

As for me and my own training, I'm not so sure how it's going. The rabbit isn't the type of master to tell you whether you're doing good or bad, but every day, I do feel my kicks getting stronger.

And now, to wrap up that training, I find myself back in front of a familiar monster.

It's a—

“Oiiink...”

“Errr... Do you really think we can win?”

“It is not about whether you can or cannot win. You will win.”

“Woof...”

It's a Mithril Boar. The same monster that I couldn't defeat the other day and one that the rabbit kicked into oblivion without even breaking a sweat.

And as I look more closely, I see that this one is even bigger than the first.

“Hmm, don't you think it's a bit too early to go looking for revenge? It hasn't even been a week yet.”

“You do not simply wait idly by to take revenge. Since this monster is the same type that you fought before, you already have a grip on its attack patterns, do you not?”

“Sigh...”

Having realized that nothing I say will sway the rabbit, I decide to start the battle by activating my Identify skill.

King Mithril Boar

Level: 3, **Mana:** 5000, **Attack:** 60000, **Defense:** 100000,
Agility: 50000, **Intelligence:** 3000, **Luck:** 1000
Skills: Charge, Iron Wall, Reflect, Super Smell, Mana Manipulation, Earth Magic

“Hey, wait! This isn’t the same as before!”

It’s even stronger! I knew something was off about its presence and its aura! Look! It’s on a whole other level!

And it’s not just that. The last Mithril Boar had crazy stats for something that was level 10.

Now I’m facing a King Mithril Boar, and it has even more ridiculous stats at just level 3! Are you kidding me?

“This is impossible, Master Rabbit.”

“You will be fine. I will save you before you die.”

“Couldn’t you save me before I get injured instead?!”

There is nothing about this battle plan that I’m okay with!

“Oink... Oiiiiink!”

While the rabbit and I talk, the King Mithril Boar grows impatient and charges forward even quicker than the Mithril Boar from last time.

I manage to twist out of the way, but as the monster passes by, it shakes its head forcefully to try to hit me with its tusk.

“Gah?!”

I immediately make my Infinite Gauntlet appear to defend against the attack, but the boar sends me flying with ease, and I smack right into a Black Ironwood.

“Woof?!”

“No. You must not intervene. He must be able to fight his way through this himself.”

“Oink...”

Night is stopped by the rabbit, and Akatsuki retreats, still watching the fight unfold.

“S-seriously...? I was counting on Night’s help...”

“What is the matter? Fighting like that, you will quickly perish. I have already told you that Demons exist in this world. And they are much, much stronger than a monster like this can ever hope to be. In front of an enemy like that, you will not be able to protect anyone at this rate.”

“I don’t...”

I don’t want that.

I think about Night and Akatsuki...Lexia and Luna... If anything were to happen to the friends I’ve met in this world... I don’t want to be unable to save them.

I regain my footing and grab my Absolute Spear.

Even though I was flung against a Black Ironwood, I managed to

avoid some of the impact, so I can still move without drinking an Herb of Complete Healing Juice.

“Oooooiiiiiiiink!”

Seeing me get back up seems to enrage the King Mithril Boar, and it comes charging toward me again with even more vigor than before.

I let it, and as soon as the boar reaches me, I spin to its side to avoid the impact.

Once it has passed by, I aim for its rump and unleash the kick that my master taught me!

“Hiiiiyaaaaah!”

“Oi-oiiiiink?!”

I might not have been able to inflict any damage on the boar from last time, but now I watch as the King Mithril Boar goes skidding headfirst, crashing into the dirt, and writhing in agony from the damage I did to it.

And what’s more, I can finally follow its movements now. Unlike before.

During my special training with the rabbit, not only did the force of my kicks increase, but my legs got proportionally stronger.

Because of this, every step I take is different than before, and I can move at speeds I never could have imagined possible.

I shift out of my kicking stance and throw the Absolute Spear straight at the boar as it rolls around on the ground in pain.

If it was any other monster, I could attack it with magic, but the Mithril that surrounds a King Mithril Boar has the Reflect skill, so I can’t. That’s why I really need to utilize things like my Absolute Spear and the rabbit’s training.

As soon as the boar sees the Absolute Spear flying toward it, it panics and repels it upward with its huge tusks.

But I don’t let up.

“Haaaaaargh!”

At the moment I threw the Absolute Spear, I also began running toward the boar. Next, I grab the Divine Whip from my Item Box and crack it toward the spear.

The whip reaches the Absolute Spear and wraps around the handle.

I leap into the air using my powerful legs and pull back the whip. I draw the spear toward me, and just as it floats over the head of the boar, I aim a hammer kick at it.

“Hiyaaaah!”

“Oiiink?!”

The Absolute Spear flies through the air with incredible force, powered by the leg strength I’ve developed during my training with the rabbit, and easily pierces and slides right through the top of the King Mithril Boar’s head. As my attack ends, I see that not only does

the boar crash down to the ground, but the wind-force from my hammer kick alone has left a crater, too.

The vanquished King Mithril Boar disappears into motes of light and leaves behind a scattering of drop items.

As I land on the ground, I drop onto my butt, mentally wiped out from the fight.

“I—I beat it!”

“Hmph. I actually requested that you kill it with kicks alone...but I shall give you a pass anyway.”

“S-seriously...”

This battle would have probably dragged on if I hadn’t relied on the sage’s weapons. And even then, I still might not have made it.

I’m still pulling a face, mulling back on what the rabbit said, when Night and Akatsuki come running over.

“Woof! Woof?”

“Oink! Oink, oink.”

“Were you guys worried about me? Thanks. But as you can see, I’m all right.”

Both Night and Akatsuki take turns snuggling against me and giving me little licks. They must have been worried. Thank god I didn’t die.

“Very well. Consider our training done for today. Now, finish appraising and gathering up your drop items and let us head back.”

“Okay.”

Since the rabbit said it’s okay, I gather up the remaining drop items and check them out one by one.

Great Tusk of the Undemonic Boar—A great tusk from a King Mithril Boar. This tusk is made of Mithril, which is impervious to all magic and cannot be so much as scratched by run-of-the-mill attacks. Special techniques are required to turn these tusks into weapons, which can reflect magic and tear flesh.

Great Hide of the Undemonic Boar—The great hide of a King Mithril Boar. This hide is made of Mithril, which is impervious to all magic and boasts high levels of durability against physical attacks. As this hide is not made of solid Mithril, it is quite light compared to items that are. This item can be used to make a type of armor that is legendary among adventurers.

Meat of the Undemonic Boar—The meat of a King Mithril Boar. While this meat has a slightly peculiar flavor and smell, it’s highly addictive from the first bite. This meat should only be made available at markets and auction every few hundred years, as the people who eat it will begin to desperately crave

it.

Magic Stone: SS—Rank SS. A special stone that can be harvested from monsters with mana.

Broom of Exorcists—A rare drop item acquired from King Mithril Boars. One sweep of this broom purifies even the stubbornest dirt and stains. The broom automatically collects waste and holds on to it, no matter how much you clean. When the job is done, the dirt automatically separates from the bristles for easy cleanup. This broom also purifies spirits and curses.



“Rank SS?! And where the hell did this broom come from?!”

As taken aback as I am to find an SS-rank Magic Stone, I’m completely blown away by the super-useful household goods, as per usual. This broom has some really cool abilities! Way more than what a normal broom can do!

I’m so pleased about the broom that I don’t start even thinking about the Magic Stone until I’ve stashed away the broom.

“SS-rank, huh... And here I thought that S was the best.”

“What are you talking about? Neither S-rank nor SS-rank are the best ranks.”

“What? Are you sure?”

SS-rank is crazy enough, but...is this rabbit really telling me that it doesn’t stop there? I can’t even begin to imagine anything stronger.

Both Night and Akatsuki are cocking their heads, looking even more stumped than I am. In fact, Akatsuki cocks his head so much that he loses his balance and falls over sideways onto the floor. So cute.

The antics of Night and Akatsuki offer me some comfort by distracting me from reality as the rabbit folds his arms and tells me more about the ranks.

“Above SS-rank are SSS-rank, EX-rank, and L-rank.”

“Whoa! There’re more ranks than I thought!”

And here I was thinking there’d only be another one or two more! How can there be so many?!

With even the most seasoned warriors like Owen being so afraid of the monsters that infest the entrance to the Weald and drop A-rank Magic Stones, I always assumed they were pretty much the toughest around... But if they’re so far down the food chain, then what would happen if an EX-class or an L-class monster appeared? Would it be like the end of the world?

“Eek... I don’t even want to imagine what an L-class is like...”

“Fear not. It’s not every day you meet an EX-class monster or above. Besides, they don’t seem to be very interested in fighting. As long as we leave them alone, they are harmless.”

“And...if we don’t leave them alone...?”

“We would be absolutely obliterated.”

“Huh?!”

All I can do is gasp. If I ever meet one, I’m running away. And preferably, I’d like to not bump into one in the first place.

“It might do you good to know that there are some EX- and L-class monsters said to reside in the farthest depths of the Weald.”

“But that’s so close!”

Yet I’m not surprised. The Weald is infamous because it’s home to many powerful monsters, so it’s not too much of a stretch of the

imagination to believe that some of the strongest ranked monsters might live there, too.

“B-by the way, ummm...what rank monsters do you think you could beat...?”

“Good question... I believe I could manage to defeat an EX-class monster somehow...although I’m not quite so sure. One thing I can say for certain is that I would not walk away from such a fight without significant injury. The Demon monsters that we fight are all L-class, but slaying them still requires us Deities to work in groups. Defeating them in one-on-one combat would be nigh on impossible.”

“What? Are the Demons really that strong?!”

“Of course they are. They are crystallizations of the world’s negativity. The other Deities and I are merely singular beings. How could we possibly defeat one alone? So, does that change anything? Are you more inclined to succeed me now?”

“I don’t think I’ll ever accept your offer now.”

How could I? Barring the sage, I think this rabbit might be the strongest thing I have ever met, so if even he can’t beat one, why on Earth would I accept a position that obligates *me* to fight them? I’m not that brave.

Thinking about all this makes me wonder just how powerful the sage really was.

“Maybe he was stronger than the L-classes...”

“Hmm? Did you say something?”

“Ah, no. It’s nothing.”

“Is that right? It matters not. If you have finished gathering your drop items, it is time to go.”

“Okey dokey!”

I’ve finished picking up all the drop items and I’m about to go home when a message suddenly flashes in front of me.

“You have gained a level. As you have achieved a certain level, you will now evolve.”

“...Huh?”

“Hmm? What?”

Before I even have time to react, my body starts to glow.

“Hey! Hang on! What the hell is happening to me?!”

“W-woof!”

“Oink!”

Night and Akatsuki try to get closer to me, but it seems like they’re unsure if they should touch me and run around me restlessly instead.

Even I’m freaking out now. The only one of us not freaking out is the rabbit.

“Panic not. You are merely preparing to evolve.”

“E-evolve?! What does that mean?!”

“It means what it says. You’ve gained enough levels, so now you will evolve into a superior form... Although I have to admit, it’s incredibly rare for it to happen to a human.”

“How can you sound so indifferent telling me something like that?!”

At the beginning, it sounded like everyone went through an unexpected evolution here, but no, apparently human evolution is incredibly rare. And more importantly still...!

“What’s going to happen to me?! I’m not gonna become a monster or anything, am I?!”

“This is the first time you have evolved, is it not? Then there should not be any drastic changes... At least, I suspect there won’t be.”

“I’m so uneasy about all of this!”

If I suddenly sprout a horn or grow wings, that’s gonna be really hard to explain.

I’m sure it wouldn’t be a problem if I was going to live here forever, but I have a life on Earth, too!

Despite my inner panic, I soon realize this light isn’t about to disappear anytime soon, and the only thing I can really do is accept my fate.

Eventually, the flashing slows, then stops, and I can finally see my new form.

“H-how bad is it...?”

I was prepared for the same extreme pain that I felt when I first came to this world and leveled up for the first time, but it never came.

I quickly look over my appearance and touch my face, but it doesn’t seem like anything major has changed.

“Uhhh...is there anything different about me?”

“Woof?”

“Oink?”

Night and Akatsuki look me over, but once again just cock their heads until they flop down onto their sides. It’s kind of adorable.

“If you are wondering about your appearance, you still look very much the same.”

“I—I do?!”

Good! If I had changed even more than when I first leveled up, then I have no idea what I would have told people.

“However, now that you have evolved, you should look at your stats.”

“Ah...yeah. You’re right.”

It’s been a while, so I decide to take the rabbit’s advice.

They are:

Yuuya Tenjou

Species: Human (Transcended), **Occupation:** None, **Level:**

1, **Mana:** 10000, **Attack:** 15000, **Defense:** 15000, **Agility:** 15000, **Intelligence:** 9000, **Luck:** 15500, **BP:** 10000

Skills: Appraise (SR), Endurance (SSR), Item Box (SSR), Comprehend Languages (SSR), True Art of War (SR): 9, Detect Presence (N), Speed Reading (N), Cooking (N): M, Map (SR), Mind's Eye+ (SSR), One with Nature (SR), Tame (R), Unity of Body and Mind (R), Mental Fortitude (R), Field Guide (SR), Mana Manipulation (R), Peak of Magic (U), Moderation (N), Holy Kick (U): 2, Concealment (R)

Titles: Master of the Door, Master of the House, Stranger from a Different World, First-Time Traveler to a Different World, Apprentice of the Sage, Inheritor of the Supreme Mana Pathways, Inheritor of the Ultimate Magic, Apprentice of the Deity of Kicks, Master of the Deity of Kicks

“Wow, that’s a lot of new stuff.”

I know that my skills have been leveling up in the background, but this is the first time I’ve seen the actual number of skills I have increase or decrease, not to mention the ridiculous increase in the number of titles I have.



First thing's first, though. It's time to allocate my BP.
In the end, my stats look like this:

Yuuya Tenjou

Species: Human (Transcended), **Occupation:** None, **Level:** 1, **Mana:** 11000, **Attack:** 17000, **Defense:** 17000, **Agility:** 17000, **Intelligence:** 10500, **Luck:** 17000, **BP:** 0

"G-great. Now calm down, Yuuya. Let's check out these stats one by one..."

Human (Transcended)—An evolved form of the human. Although there is no change in physical appearance, stats as a whole are enhanced. Instills a strong resistance against illness.

"Wow, that sounds amazing!"

I'm grateful that all my stats have been enhanced, and the heightened resistance to illness is a nice little cherry on top.

Even though I can always heal myself with an Herb of Complete Healing Juice, you never know what might happen in battle.

I normally take good care of myself anyway, but it's still reassuring to have.

"Next up...my new skills. I wonder if this Mind's Eye+ is a better version of the Mind's Eye skill that the rabbit has. Since I've lost my Dodge and Detect Weakness skills, I guess they've been integrated into it, but...apart from that, I don't know what any of this means."

And I guess I just casually know Holy Kick now. I shouldn't be too surprised, though. I was trained by the Deity of Kicks, after all... But why is the rarity listed as Unique? Both the rabbit and I can use it, so that can't be right, can it?

Pulling myself together, I continue to look through the rest of my unfamiliar new skills.

Mind's Eye+—Combines the ultimate form of the Dodge skill, Mind's Eye, with the effects of Detect Weakness.

Peak of Magic—Unlike normal elemental magic skills, this magic can be used regardless of element due to your understanding of specialized magical theory. The effect of the magic depends on the user's imagination and mana.

Moderation—This skill can freely adjust the power of all abilities. Unfortunately, it takes some time to get used to.

Concealment—This skill can hide different phenomena. If used on stats, it can prevent others from seeing them. It can

also be used to conceal magic.

“Whoa, I’m sure these will all come in handy...”

I appreciate the Moderation skill in particular. Now that I’ve evolved and gotten these new stats, they might start interfering with my life back on Earth.

I also haven’t really thought about the Concealment skill yet, but considering that there are probably others in this world who can use the Appraise and Identify skills, it might cause some issues if they see my Stranger from a Different World title, so I can definitely put that to use here.

“All right. Lastly, let’s look at the titles...”

The one I’m most surprised by is my Apprentice of the Sage title. I know I inherited the sage’s mana pathways and magical theory and all, but still...

Apprentice of the Sage—A title bestowed upon someone who has come into contact with the thoughts of the sage and acquired his knowledge. Has the effect of diminishing the amount of mana consumed.

Inheritor of the Supreme Mana Pathways—A title bestowed upon the inheritor of the supreme mana pathways.

Inheritor of the Ultimate Magic—A title bestowed upon the inheritor of the ultimate magic.

Apprentice of the Deity of Kicks—A title bestowed upon those who become an apprentice of the Deity of Kicks. Unlocks the Holy Kick skill.

Master of the Deity of Kicks—A title bestowed upon those who become a master to the Deity of Kicks.

“I...see...”

It seems it’s because I found his book and learned his magic that I’ve been recognized as an apprentice of the sage. Maybe it is weird that the book alone creates that kind of relationship between us, but I’m just happy I get to feel a connection with him.

Apart from that, I now know why I can use the Holy Kick skill, but I’ve still gotta be diligent every day and prove myself worthy of it.

I think, overall, the craziest thing that happened during my evolution was my change in species.

“Sigh... To think that I’d end up evolving...”

“What are you complaining about? Others are normally happy about that.”

“Th-they are?”

“Of course. Evolution means they have become stronger. Humans may know little about the concept, but the beastpeople and the elves are

overjoyed when they evolve.”

“Oh, right...”

I don't really know what elves and beastpeople the rabbit is talking about, but I guess I don't mind getting stronger. This world is a dangerous one, after all.

Still...it's just like what was written in the sage's book. It's not all about getting stronger; I need to build relationships with people, too. He advised that specifically.

As I reflect on the words the sage left me, the rabbit keeps staring.

“...Since you have evolved, the future has become even more uncertain to me than before... I do wonder what might happen...”

“Huh?”

“...It matters not. In any case, there is nothing else that I can teach you today. Go home and rest... Oh, and if you happen to get yourself into any trouble when I am not there, feel free to put those techniques I taught you into practice. They work just as well on people as they do on monsters. Remember that experience in the former is also important.”

The rabbit leaves me with a few words of advice and, just like last time, nimbly hops up off the ground and uses the empty air as a foothold to fly upward.

“...I wonder if I'll be able to do that, too, if I keep up my training.”

“Woof?”

“Oink.”

Both Night and Akatsuki just look back at me in confusion.

It's the day before the Ball Tournament.

We already decided during the last meeting who would play what sport, so now we're just formulating our strategies and carefully preparing when Ryou's mouth suddenly drops open as if he has just remembered something.

“Oh, that's right. Some photographers are gonna come to the tournament to take Yuuya's picture, aren't they?”

“Y-yeah, now that you m-mention it.”

“Huh? What are you two talking about?”

With a reflective shine glinting off his glasses, Osamu questions us after overhearing Ryou and Shingo recount our conversation with the talent agency staff.

Soon other students are also looking in my direction with a surprised look on their faces.

“Ummm...the other day some talent agency guys came to scout Yuuya on the way home from school.”

“Y-yeah. He declined their offer, but they were really p-persistent, so in the end, he agreed to be a part of a special magazine feature on Ousei Academy instead of b-becoming a celebrity or anything. I-it

looks like they got permission to shoot here, so the agency staff are going to come and cover the Ball Tournament...”

I'd just gotten to the point when I'd almost forgotten about the stuff with the rabbit and evolving, when Ryou and Shingo end up driving the class into a whole new commotion.

“I—I had no idea that was going to happen...”

“Really? So we might even be featured in *Puppy Magazine*?!”

“Whoa! I'd better try even harder than I'd planned!”

I had been worried about how people would feel about outsiders coming to our event, but luckily, everyone seems to be on board with the idea.

That's when one classmate blurts out something under his breath.

“Huh? Wait. If they're coming here to take pictures of Yuuya, then if I'm on the same team, there's a higher chance they'll take my picture, too, right...?”

“““ ””””

For a moment, the entire class is silent.

And then—

“Yuuuuuya! Please... Please join the soccer team!”

“Huh?! If he's going to be on any team, it's basketball!”

“No, no, no. It has to be the dodgeball team.”

“U-ummm...?”

It makes me happy that everyone wants me to join their team, but I can't help feeling as though I'll end up causing trouble no matter which one I wind up on...

Besides, isn't everyone forgetting something?

“Uhhh... Aren't I already on the table tennis team...?”

“““ ... ””””

The guys arguing turn still as statues.

“That's riiiiight!”

“Why...? Why couldn't I have won rock-paper-scissors back then...?!”

“I wish I could go back in time and choose a different hand to throw...!”

Everyone seems way more disappointed than I was expecting, so I'm not sure what I should say.

Ryou is looking around the class in astonishment as he claps a hand to my shoulder.

“Look, they'll get over it. Just do your best with table tennis!”

“Y-yeah, I will.”

With no clue what I should say, all I can do is nod.

Today is the day of the Ball Tournament.

The atmosphere at the academy is that buoyant energy you get on

festival days, and the whole class has been restless since homeroom.

Since we only have the tournament today, nobody is in uniform. Instead, we're all wearing gym clothes or workout stuff.

"All right! Today is an important tournament that's gonna determine your teacher's bonus. Losing is not an option!"

"We're not really doing this for you, though, Ms. Sawada."

Everyone nods in agreement with Ryou's comment. Yeah, I see that Ms. Sawada is brazen as ever... Although, to be fair, she could just be saying that to ease everyone's nerves...right?

After that, we go through some simple dos and don'ts and then head to where each of our teams is supposed to assemble.

On my way to the meeting spot, I bump into Kurosawa and the boss from the talent agency.

"Hi, Yuuya. We want you to cut a gallant figure in our pictures today."

"U-uhhh..."

"Oh, but try not to think too much about the cameras. Miu and Hikaru both told us that you're still not used to taking photos, so just act natural."

"Okay..."

A little confused, I turn my attention to the multiple photographers setting up behind the boss.

Following my gaze, Kurosawa and the boss look in their direction, too.

"...Oh, don't be shy!"

"How could I not be?!"

There are way more photographers than I was expecting! I underestimated by a lot. I thought there would be two at most, but there are at least ten here.

And they don't just have SLR cameras with them. I can see what look like TV cameras, too. This is a bigger deal than I thought it would be.

"It's fine! Once you're a celebrity, you'll get used to it!"

"Yeah, but I distinctly remember turning down that offer..."

"Oh? Well, maybe I'm not quite through with you yet."

"....."

I don't even know how to react to that. I thought they'd given up already.

"But you don't have to be nervous. The subject of this feature is Ousei Academy after all, so we're taking some background shots around the grounds and a couple of pictures of some other students. We definitely still want a picture of you, though, so just bear that in mind."

I know what the boss is trying to say, but I can't help being nervous

when I know that my picture is gonna be taken.

...Oh well. If I get distracted worrying about the photographers and lose my match, then that makes everything a bit pointless. I'd better focus.

"Ummm...sorry, but I have to get going to the meeting place soon..."

"That's okay. We're looking forward to seeing you play."

"Do your best, Yuuya."

I leave Kurosawa and the boss behind and head to the team meetup spot.

"L-let's win this thing! Right, Yuuya?"

"Yeah!"

As I arrive at the gym, Shingo and my other teammates are already gathered there.

"Wahhh! I'm so nervous..."

"I never thought in a million years that we'd get Yuuya on the table tennis team."

"Yeah, I know. I was so sure that he'd end up on the soccer or basketball team."

"Oof... I know that no one's coming to take my picture in particular, but knowing that the photographers are definitely gonna be here to take Yuuya's...kinda makes me nervous."

Shingo and my other classmates on the table tennis team aren't really athletic types like Ryou or some of the others. There are a lot of students like Shingo who are a little more indoors-y.

That being said, before I started going to the other world, I hardly went outside, either, so it's kinda reassuring to be surrounded by other people like that.

I guess people expected me to join either the soccer team or the basketball team and thought that the talent agency staff would head there, so we'd get no cameras here.

I kind of wonder if I'm causing them trouble, but everyone seems to be taking it well, so that's good.

The table tennis that I'll be playing today is separated into singles and doubles. It looks like I'll be playing in the singles, and Shingo will be in the doubles.

After a little while, the list of matches is revealed, so we go and check it out.

As soon as he looks at it, Shingo's expression clouds over.

"Awww... The first players we're up against are from the Athletics Class..."

"The Athletics Class?"

"Oh, those students weren't on the field trip that we went on, so maybe you don't know them."

I cock my head to show that I don't, so Shingo kindly explains.

In a nutshell, there's the normal class that Shingo and I belong to and then a separate class called the Athletics Class, which is full of students who got into the academy based on sports recommendations. It seems the reason I'd never heard of them is because they're based in a separate building, so we never see them in the academy. Plus, they didn't take part in the field trip that we had to go on earlier.

Although it sounds like they had to do some kind of special lesson instead of the trip.

Since they're the Athletics Class specifically, I wonder if what they did instead of the field trip was more physically advanced. Luckily for us, I have my skills from the other world, so the field trip wasn't so tough for me in the end, but...

"T-to tell you the truth, Ryou was also supposed to be in the Athletics Class, but he wanted to focus on other stuff, too, so he ended up in ours."

Damn, Ryou. You're so high-flying. Like a hero in a storybook or something.

I'm way more interested in this new information about Ryou than the existence of the other class, to be honest.

"Ugh... I really don't want to lose in the f-first match."

Shingo slouches off defeatedly to join his doubles teammate. You can do it, Shingo!

Ahhh... I'm worried about Shingo, but I need to think about who I'm going up against as well.

We never got to practice table tennis in class. I hope I'm okay at it.

It's a bit late now, but I'm starting to get nervous, and before I know it, I'm up.

"All right, make sure to get lots of pictures!"

Even though I'm so anxious, a photographer chases after me and hovers close by my side. How am I supposed to act normal about this?

"Ummm... Could you back off a little bit...?"

"No."

"Huh...?!"

No...? It looks like I don't even get a say in this.

I give up on starting an argument and just head toward the table.

Then...

"Hmm? So *you're* my opponent."

A muscly male student stands there imposingly.

His short-sleeved gym clothes and shorts can barely contain his bulk, and he's even taller than I am. Easily one hundred and ninety centimeters.

More than anything, he has sharp and intense sniper-like facial features.

...Hmm? Wait! Is he really a high school student?! He doesn't look the same age as me at all!

I'm completely taken aback by my unexpected opponent, but he just ignores me and snaps his fingers.

"Heh-heh-heh... I wonder if you'll even be able to follow along with my delicate techniques."

There is nothing about this man that looks delicate! If anything, he gives off an aura that he just bulldozes over everything.

But why is a guy like him playing table tennis?! He doesn't look the type at all! Surely there are sports that suit your body type better than this, aren't there?!

...Whichever way you look at him, he does look like someone from the class Shingo described. Even though he's suddenly my opponent here...

The male student doesn't seem to notice my unease as he methodically checks his paddle for imperfections.

Then he quickly glances up at the photographers.

"Hmph... I don't usually like having to deal with weird looks as I play, you know..."

"Y-yeah, sorry about that."

Even though my own classmates were happy to accept the photographers, there are probably other students like this guy who aren't.

"Hmm? There's no need to apologize. I'll give the performance of a lifetime no matter the circumstances... That's why I'm a pro."

"...A-a pro?!"

I mean, he doesn't look much like a student, so...maybe he is a pro and I've just never heard of him.

It's most likely a side hustle or something, though.

"Hey! Th-that's...! That's the Sniper. He's a regular at the nationals!"

"Wh-what?! The Sniper?! The guy who never misses?!"

"Hmm, now that you mention it, I think I heard that guy was an Ousei Academy student..."

"Ouch. Going up against the Sniper first... That's one unlucky guy."

Oh, so he is famous! And he's nicknamed the Sniper?! Well, the name fits!

But...it is just like the photographers are saying. I must have really crappy luck to draw such a famous player first.

We haven't been able to practice table tennis in gym, so I wonder if I can even put up a fight...

As I anxiously pick up my paddle, the teacher acting as referee approaches.

"Right. Let's get this match started. Ready...begin!"

My opponent bends low.

“Hmph... It shouldn’t take much more than one serve to deal with the likes of you...!”

The Sniper whacks the ball hard, putting a crazy spin on it.

It’s flying toward me, rotating like a bullet.

“Wh-what a serve!”

“Looks like he’s aiming straight for the corner of his opponent’s court...”

“I guess there’s a reason they call him the Sniper.”

Since when did the photographers become commentators?

They’re neglecting their actual work and just trembling in awe at the Sniper’s technique. Should they even be doing that?

I set my concerns aside and focus back on the ball that’s flying toward me.

“Whoa... Oh...?”

While I’m initially surprised by the fact that the force behind the ball is strong enough to shake my paddle by the sheer speed of the rotation, as soon as I focus on the ball, it suddenly looks like it’s moving in slow motion.

Even though it was originally moving at normal speed, now both the ball and everything around it are moving super slow.

Somehow, this phenomenon seems familiar.

It happened before when I was being photographed with Miu and that model-slash-boxer tried to hit me. It seems like this body has gotten so used to the battles of the other world that nothing is fast anymore unless it’s going at least as fast as the monsters I’ve fought.

I’m still confused and haven’t gotten comfortable with this game. But if I just stand here, the Sniper is going to get a point, so I hit the ball back in the exact same way that the Sniper hit it toward me.

Whoosh!

“Huh?”

The ball flies straight through the table and penetrates the gym floor.

“““.....”””

Neither the teachers nor me nor the photographers say anything. We just stare at the holes in the table and floor.

“Ref, I forfeit,” I say, holding my hands up in the air.

“H-hey, could you tell when he hit the ball...?”

“No way. I think I was immediately distracted by all the crazy sounds I was hearing.”

“Never mind that! Did you not see the hole he blew in the table?”

Oh, I’ve done it now! There’s no going back from this!

After all that, I forfeited without a second thought...but the more I think about it, the more I wonder if it was for the best.

The official reason for the photographers to be here is to create a feature based on Ousei Academy, but originally, it was because they wanted to take pictures of me... Should I really have forfeited?

That thought flashes through my mind, but it's scarier to think that I could have hurt someone if I had continued, so maybe it was the right decision after all.

If I hit that ball with enough force to send it flying through both the table and the floor, then what if it had hit a person...? Then *I'd* be the sniper.

As I breathe out slowly, the boss of the talent agency comes scurrying toward me.

"H-hey, Yuuya! This is no good for us! You're out in the first match! And at your own request..."

"Y-yeah...but I was up against a pro. Surely you must have known that even if I had carried on, I would have eventually lost anyway..."

"Not necessarily. You returned that pro's ball. At the very least, you would have put up a good fight, wouldn't you?"

"....."

The boss looks at me closely.

"Although I didn't quite expect you to hit the ball through the table. You're keeping something from us all, aren't you...?"

"Ah-ha-ha-ha-ha... No, I'm not."

Th-this woman is sharp!

Still, I have no intention at all of talking about the other world, so I try laughing it off.

"...We'll see. In any case, we can't do what we came here to do now that you've lost, so you're going to need to make this up to us somehow."

"What?! But what do you expect me to—?"

"I'll leave it up to you!"

The boss is already rushing off somewhere with Kurosawa before I can finish my sentence. Hmm... I wonder if I'm gonna have to find some way to enter another event or something...

I don't know if they'd actually let me do that, though...

In any case, I forfeited quite early, so I should go to cheer on my teammates until there's something else that I can do.

The first table I head for is playing host to Shingo's doubles match. Even though I cheer for him and his doubles partner, he's playing another Athletics Class member, as he expected, and they end up losing.

But this Athletics Class member isn't nearly as muscly as the one I went up against. He's just a normal-looking student. That's good, though. I don't know what we'd do if every single one of them was as ripped as the Sniper.

As soon as Shingo realizes that I'm watching, his shoulders drop, and he comes over to talk to me.

"Ugh...that w-went just about as well as expected..."

"But you guys still got some points, so you don't have to feel too bad."

"I-if you say so...but I did do my best as someone who's n-not that great at sports. My doubles p-partner saved my butt a lot, though."

It's a shame they lost, but in the end, it seems like Shingo had fun, and that puts a smile on my face.

"Oh, b-by the way, what happened in your match, Yuuya?"

"What?"

"W-well, I'm sure the photographers were getting a bit in your face, but I bet you wo—"

"...I forfeited."

"...Huh?"

I can't even look Shingo in the eye when I admit it, and he stares at me in shock.

"Y-you forfeited... What happened?"

"...Well...uhhh...I kinda hit the ball through the table and the floor..."

"Through the table and floor?!"

Yeah, that's the normal reaction to have.

Even though I'm the one telling the story, it sounds a bit far-fetched to me as well. But it happened, and there's no getting around it!

"I—I don't really get it...but thanks for playing!"

"Yeah..."

"Oh yeah! Wh-what are you doing after this, Yuuya? I thought I'd go and watch Ryou playing his match outside, but..."

"Errr...as I told you earlier, I forfeited my match, so the talent agency couldn't get the pictures they wanted. They want me to make it up to them...so I thought I'd see if I can play in any other games..."

"A-another game? I-I wonder if you can even do that..."

"Sigh... In all honesty, I don't know, but I figured I might be able to find something else I can play as I go around and support my other classmates. So after I've scoped out the gym, I'll probably come and check out Ryou's match if he's still playing."

"O-okay...then I'll see you later."

Shingo and I go our separate ways for now, and I start to look around the gym.

That's when I hear someone suddenly shout my name.

"Yuuya!"

"Hmm? Oh, Kaede!"

Kaede comes running over.

When she arrives in front of me, she looks at me curiously.

“Hey! What’s up? Is the match over already?”

“Oh... Actually, some things happened, and I ended up forfeiting.”

“Wait, what?! That’s a shame. I was just coming to watch you.”

“Oh...sorry about that. How’s it going for you, Kaede? You’re on the volleyball team, right?”

“Yep! ...Oh, by the way, are you free right now?”

“Huh? I—I guess I am.”

I’m not sure what Kaede is getting at, but when I tilt my head, she grabs my hands.

“Yuuya, I beg of you! Would you please join the volleyball team?!”

“Huh?!”

As I stand taken aback by her request, Kaede begins to explain despairingly.

“The match I’m supposed to be playing in is a mixed match, but... one of our players got injured. We managed to win that match with a man down, but our opponents for the next one are from a class stacked with people from the Volleyball Club, so it’s going to be really hard for us without enough players. So what do you say...? Will you join us?”

Kaede looks up at me anxiously through her eyelashes.

“I don’t have any problem joining you guys...but are you sure it’s okay for an unregistered team member to play?”

“Oh no, that’ll be fine. Don’t worry about that!”

“O-oh. Then in that case, I’ll give it a try.”

“Really?! Thank you so much, Yuuya!”

Kaede grins happily.

And I’m grateful, too. Especially since I had to find another match to join to fulfill the talent agency’s request.

After Kaede leads me to the volleyball team, I spot a familiar face. It’s Rin.

“Oh, Yuuya. Don’t tell me you’re going to be our sub?”

“Yeah, Kaede asked me to. Is that okay?”

“Of course it is. Right, everyone?!” Rin asks the rest of the team, who all nod with enthusiasm.

“I—I can’t believe we get to play with Yuuya...!”

“Huh, so that means that with Yuuya here, the photographers won’t be far behind, right?!”

“Ahhh! Then we’d better not lose!”

As everyone gets fired up before the next match, the photographers who have followed me here begin to set up.

“It looks like he’s trying his hand at volleyball next.”

“And it’s mixed boys and girls, right? This should get us some good pictures.”

“Psst. I heard that the girls at Ousei Academy are on another level.

They're even more photogenic than Yuuya."

"Then they should make good subjects."

I half expected this, but as the photographers talk, I can see fires light inside the eyes of my fellow teammates. Especially the girls for some reason...

"Ha... I'm so ready for this!"

"We might even get photographed with Yuuya, mightn't we?"

"We can't let them see us lose!"

Everyone gets themselves into a competitive mindset, and before long, the match has begun. Despite the fact that the opposing team is full of volleyball players, we earn point after point.

"Kaede, here!"

"All right! Let's go!"

Rin tosses the ball to Kaede, who jumps powerfully off the ground and smoothly spikes the ball.

I call over to her with a smile on my face.

"Nice one, Kaede. Way to go!"

"Wow, I got complimented by Yuuya...!"

"My, that's a big grin, Kaede."

"Wh-what?"

As I watch Kaede try to cover her face, a smirking Rin edges toward me.

"So how was it, Yuuya?"

"Hmm? Oh, she was amazing. And that toss was perfectly timed, Ri—"

"No, silly! I'm talking about that chest of hers!"

"Ack!" I nearly choke.

"Whaaa—?! R-Rin?!"

Rin slides around behind Kaede and grabs hold of her boobs.

"You saw these puppies bouncing around all over the place when she sent that spike over the net, right?"

"No! Because I wasn't really looking in that area, I guess."

"Oh? Isn't that strange? Especially when her boobs are this great..."

"Agh?! W-wait, Rin! You're making me mad!"

Rin continues to rub Kaede's boobs in front of me, so I activate my Unity of Body and Mind and my Mental Fortitude skills to look away as fast as I can. Thank god for those!

I know this isn't what their intended purpose is, but still, it means I can get to work trying to diffuse the situation.

Despite the antics, our team steadily gains points, and we edge closer and closer to the win.

That's when I suddenly hear the voice of the spectating talent agency boss from across the court.

"Hey, Yuuya! You're in the background too much. Try to spike the

ball or something!”

“Huh?”

It’s true. I have been playing more of a support position. I’ve been trying to not spike any balls on purpose, choosing instead to block spikes from other teams and go after balls that others can’t reach.

Going by the table tennis match, trouble always seems to follow when I actively play.

That’s why the boss’s request stresses me out. Kaede and Rin approach me.

“She’s right...so maybe we need to support Yuuya this time so that he gets a good shot at the ball.”

“Huh?! But...you don’t have to do that for me...”

“It’s fine! You’ve set both of us up plenty of times, right? So this time we want to repay you!”

It’s so hard to turn them down when they’re being so friendly.

That’s why I’m worrying so much about what I should do. But time waits for no man, and the match continues.

Then Rin claims a spiked ball from the opposing team. Kaede tosses it, and...

“Oh, sorry! Is that too high?!”

The toss goes higher than expected, but if I wait for it to come back down, that gives the other team just enough time to prepare a block.

So—

“Hup!”

“Huh?!”

I kick myself up off the ground and into the air after the ball. Now that my legs are so strong after all the training with Master Rabbit, I’m sure that if I wanted to, I could jump up and grab a ball even if it hit the gym roof.

I’ve anxiously thought through a lot of scenarios in my head, but whatever will be, will be, so I desperately aim toward the opponent’s court and spike the ball.

“Hyah!”

Bang!

Just as I hear a big bang, the wind generated by the force of my spike mows the volleyball court net right down.

I know I was pushing my luck, but I should have still been able to control my strength. My spike has burst the ball, and the net is on the ground.

Luckily, no one’s hurt, but the students are all looking at the destroyed court in silence.

“.....”

“Uh...I-I’m sorry about that.”

Even the photographers and their boss, the one who wanted me to do a spike in the first place, are staring at me in astonishment. All I can think to do is apologize. They didn't get the spike shots after all...

As I begin to worry about the rest of the match, someone from the opposing team lifts their hands.

"We forfeit."

—And that's how, this time, I managed to get a win through *someone else* throwing in the towel.

The other classes who watched our game forfeit immediately whenever they go up against us. In the end, we're able to win the whole thing without playing another match...unfortunately.

Honestly, I'm not very happy about that, but Rin and the others cheer me up by telling me that a win is a win, which makes me feel a little bit better. I'm really grateful for those guys.

Just as we're declared the winners in volleyball, the winners of all the other sports are also announced. I wasn't able to go and cheer on our soccer team in the end, but it looks like we won that, too.

Even though my original table tennis team didn't do too great, we did well in everything else, so Ms. Sawada is very happy. Although that woman does need to learn how to hide her greed better.

As I walk around cheering on teams in the other sports, I spot some kind of commotion down by the tennis courts.

When I look more closely, people are gathered all the way around the outside, and I even see what looks like a stretcher.

I'm heading for the epicenter of the scene, wondering who it could be and if they're hurt, when—

"Huh? Kaori?"

"Oh...Yuuya."

Smack bang in the midst of it all is Kaori of all people.

She's sitting on the ground, not looking very well. I automatically lean closer and ask her what happened.

"What on Earth happened here? Has there been an accident?"

"Well...I was playing in a doubles game for the tournament, but... my partner got injured, and now we can't continue the match..."

My eyes wander over to the stretcher, where a male student is out of it and groaning. From the looks of it, it's not a serious injury, but if he has collapsed, then it'll be pretty hard to continue.

"So...what are you gonna do, then? You're still in the middle of a match, right?"

"Unfortunately, I can't continue if I'm not in a pair, so I'll have to forfeit..."

Kaori looks at me sadly, and before I know it, words are spilling out of my mouth.

“Then why don’t I join in? It looks like you were playing a mixed game, right?”

“What?! Y-yeah, but...you’re in another class, so...”

“True, but your opponent isn’t my class. Plus, it looks like it’s okay to compete even if you’re not registered on the team...and besides, I can always switch back if your partner wakes up.”

I somehow manage to persuade the apologetic-looking Kaori, and with the permission of the opposing team, I’m allowed to play as a pair with Kaori just this once.

“O-okay then, Yuuya. Let’s do our best!”

“Right! Leave it to me.”

It looks like the match is going to restart from Kaori’s serve, so I get myself into position, and—

“Hah!”

“Huh?!”

I suddenly get a bad feeling and quickly move out of the way, just as a tennis ball comes whooshing past at incredible speed right where my head used to be.

“So, so sorry, Yuuya! Are you all right?!”

“I-I’m fine. Ah-ha-ha-ha-ha...”

Wait a second. Don’t tell me... Did she knock out her own partner...?

It’s no biggie, but I sure am glad that I could put the battle experience, intuition, and reflexes I’ve cultivated in the other world to use. Otherwise, I would have been joining him on a stretcher.

I snap out of my daydream as Kaori carefully serves another ball, which thankfully flies into the opponent’s court this time.

But the opponent quickly receives the ball and hits it back toward Kaori instead of me.

“Waaah! Hah!”

Whoosh.

Sadly, she takes a big swing and a miss, so the opposing team gets a point.

“Oh...I suppose all I really am good for is holding people back when I play sports.”

“I-it’s okay! We’ll...we’ll get through it somehow, I’m sure...!”

That’s all well and good to say, but I bet the opponents will start actively aiming for Kaori now. They have come here to win, after all.

Then what should we do—?

The game starts from Kaori’s serve again, but this time, she manages to get the ball to the opponent’s side on her first try. As expected, they aim to hit it back near her.

So—

“Hah!”

“—Haaah!”

The moment that Kaori misses, I lunge for the ball from a pretty awkward position and send it flying back over the other side of the net.

Now that Kaori and I are in the same position and one side of our court is open, that’s naturally where our opponents aim next, but...

“Haaah!”

I use the strength in my legs given to me by Master Rabbit to cross to the other side of the court in a flash and hit back the ball.

All of the photographers following my movements are staring at me in awe.

“H-hey...this Yuuya guy...isn’t too bad, eh...?”

“That follow-up shot after the girl missed was amazing enough, but crossing the court so fast was something else...”

“Yeah, and he’s aiming his balls right at the line of his opponent’s court. I can’t believe it.”

If I’m being honest, it’s like it’s just me versus the opponent pair on the court right now, so I don’t have time to think about the photographers nearby.

Still, I’m managing to keep my strength under control, and I’m picking up points by supporting Kaori, too, until we eventually get to a match point.

Our rally goes on and on until the opposing team messes up and accidentally hits the ball way too high.

The ball flies high toward Kaori, who stands prepared with her racket and renewed enthusiasm.

“This time I’ll show you that I can be useful, too...!”

Kaori aims for the ball and swings with all her might.

“Haaah!”

Whoosh.

““““Ah.””””

Cruelly, Kaori’s racket never makes contact with the ball and simply slices through thin air. The same groan escapes the lips of not only Kaori herself, but the photographers, the agency boss, and every single spectator who has come to watch. That’s when—

“Haaaah!”

I take a running jump from behind Kaori and aim for the ball, which is at its highest position so far, before swinging my racket.

“Waaah!”

After Kaori swung and missed, the force that she tried to hit the ball with threatens to knock her over, so at the exact moment I land, I jump over to Kaori and catch her before she falls.

“Are you okay?”

“Y-Yuuya...ummm, thank you.”

It looks like she has avoided any injuries.

“Did you guys get that?! You took that shot, right?!”

“Y-yeah.”

“Yessss! Perfect!”

The talent agency boss is talking excitedly to the photographers, but that doesn't really have anything to do with me.

In any case, that was the last ball of the match, and after getting the point, we're the winners.

“Ohhh... All I could do in the end was hold you back, Yuuya...”

“I—I don't really think so...”

I try to make a depressed Kaori feel better, but no matter what I say, she just keeps shaking her head.

—After the match, Kaori's first partner wakes up. But during her next match, Kaori manages to knock her partner out with a serve again. Not wanting to cause any more trouble, Kaori forfeits this time... I'm not sure if I should go and say something.

But to think that serve of hers gave me—someone who has not only leveled up but evolved in the other world—such a spook, it must have been one heck of a ball... I'm not sure Kaori would see it that way, though.

As I struggle to think of something to say to her, the very happy talent agency boss and her cohort of photographers approach me.

“Yuuya, that last match was amazing! And we got a great shot of you catching Kaori!”

“Huh?!”

She must have been talking to the photographers about that earlier. I wasn't thinking about it back then, but now that I am, that must have been super dramatic...! It's kinda late, but I'm getting a little flustered by everything!



“Ooh... All I did was get in the way from the very start until the very end...”

As she looks at Kaori wallowing in depression, the talent agency boss puts on an expression that says she’s just had an idea.

“I know! Why don’t we take a picture of you together and Yuuya together—if that’s okay with you, that is, Kaori?”

“Wh...what?! Are you sure?!”

“Of course! You two looked wonderful earlier, so I’d like to get some more shots of you both. Would that be all right, Yuuya?”

“Hmm? Er, yeah. I’m okay with it, I guess...”

“Then please, please, go ahead!”

Kaori cheers up so quickly that I wonder where her depression went. Are you really sure you want this?

At the boss’s direction, Kaori and I stand beside each other.

“Hey, Yuuya. You’re too far away. Can you lean in closer?”

“C-closer than this?!”

“It’s fine. It’s not as if I’m asking you to kiss her or anything.”

She says that, but I’m already so close that I can feel my shoulder against Kaori’s...

As I abruptly glance to the side of me, I catch Kaori’s eye. We both immediately turn red and look away.

“You two are just so sweet and innocent that it’s blinding this mature lady. But that’s not what we need right now, so give us a smile already.”

““I—I can’t!””

After spouting the exact same line at the exact same time, Kaori and I burst out laughing the moment we look at each other.

“Oh! Now’s our chance!”

What a pro! The photographer gets a shot of us right at the moment we start to laugh, so he doesn’t miss our smiles.

The Ball Tournament ends without a hitch. After we all change out of our gym clothes and I start walking home, I spot Kaori hanging around outside the school gates.

“Huh? Kaori, what are you doing here?”

At first, Kaori’s face looks pink, and she’s hesitant to say anything, but eventually, that expression is taken over by a look of determination, and she opens her mouth.

“Y-Yuuya! W-would you like to walk part of the way home together?!”

“Huh? Sure, but...why?”

“It’s just that...I caused a lot of trouble today, and...well, you helped me a lot, which cheered me up. So I thought that maybe...we

could go somewhere along the way so I can thank you properly.”

It seems like Kaori wants to show her gratitude for today.

“You don’t have to, you know.”

“No, I do! You helped me so much today. I know I can’t repay everything just by stopping someplace on the way home, but...”

“Hmm... Well, if that’s the way you feel, then why not?”

“R-really?!”

Kaori’s eyes light up joyfully at my reply. To be honest, I’m just grateful to see her looking so happy.

Besides...

“Just hanging out with you is enough for me, Kaori. It’s worth more than any repayment you could make.”

“Huh?! D-do you mean that...?”

For someone like me who has never had friends before, it makes me really happy to be invited places. That time together is more precious to me than anything.

...I hope one day I can hang out somewhere with everyone again.

As I reminisce over time spent with my friends, Kaori, who’s slightly pink and not moving much for some reason, refocuses and begins to speak.

“Y-Yuuya! Ummm...could you close your eyes for me, please?”

I’m not sure what she’s up to, but she looks serious, so I do as she says and close my eyes.

That’s when a nice fragrance enters my nose, and I feel the faintest sensation on the opposite cheek to the one Luna kissed.

“I-it’s okay now.”

“Huh?”

When I open my eyes, Kaori is standing there, redder than ever.

“Uhhh, what just happened?”

“It’s a secret.”

Kaori ignores my confusion and shoots me a mischievous yet charming smile.

CHAPTER 6

To a Town in the Other World

While Yuuya was busy with the Ball Tournament, Owen and the others arrived back in Montress safely and were on their way to report to the king.

“I have returned, Father.”

“Oh! Lexia! You’re all right?”

Relieved by his daughter’s safe return, the king, Arnold, smiled broadly and immediately issued instructions to a nearby maid.

“I’ll bet you’re tired from your journey, aren’t you, Lexia? You must rest. I’ll hear what you have to say later.”

“Thank you.”

Lexia nodded obediently and followed the maid out of the room.

As soon as she left, Arnold turned back toward Owen, swapping his earlier happy expression for one of seriousness.

“Owen, I don’t see the young man from the Weald... Where is he? I wonder.”

“Ah! Well...there were a few hiccups along the way, and in the end, he could not make it here, Your Majesty.”

“Hmm... Do those hiccups have anything to do with that girl over there, perchance?”

On the end of Arnold’s sharp stare was Luna, the girl who’d gone from assassin to bodyguard.

Despite being on the receiving end of the stern gaze of Arnold, the king of Arselia, Luna showed no indication of cracking under pressure and answered his question honestly.

“Yes. I made an attempt on your daughter’s life. The resulting delays prevented Yuuya from coming here.”

“H-hey!”

“—Oh?”

Though Owen was flustered by Luna’s bluntness, Arnold’s stare simply intensified.

“Are you telling me that you tried to kill my darling daughter, Lexia?”

“Yes. But as you can see from the fact the Lexia still lives, I failed.”

“Then why are you alive? When an assassin fails a mission, the penalty is death, is it not?”

Luna refused to cower despite an atmosphere that said *Lies will not be tolerated*...and instead remembered how Lexia requested that Luna be her bodyguard. She smiled.

“Naturally, I had also resigned myself to that fate. Then none other than Lexia intervened. That’s why I stand before you today.”

“Hmm... Is that so?”

Arnold sneered unpleasantly, and—

“Ah!”

Arnold unsheathed the Arselian sword Grackle and struck out at Luna.

But Luna didn’t even flinch. She simply extended her threads and stopped the king’s attack.

“Oh? So you saw through my sword’s power in an instant.”

“Yes. If I had aimed for your sword with my threads, you would have cut straight through them. That’s why I’ve ensnared your arms instead.”

As she said, Luna made the instantaneous decision not to use her threads to block the sword, but to prevent Arnold’s arms from moving at all.

Arnold laughed, transforming his previously surly expression into a wry smile.

“I have seen how strong you are. Do you think you could release me from these threads?”

“Sure. As long as you promise not to attack me again.”

As Owen desperately racked his brain for a way to end the standoff, the doors to the room suddenly burst open.

“Gah! Father! What are you doing to my Luna?!”

“L-Lexia?! I thought you were going to your room...!”

In stormed Lexia through the flung-open doors.

At the sight of his darling daughter, Arnold began to panic. Not only were Luna’s threads preventing him from moving, but it was also blatantly obvious what he was attempting to do.

“Of course, I did what I was bid. But then I realized that Luna was not with me. So I came back for her, and here you are...!”

The flames of Lexia’s anger burst back to life as she glared at her

father.

"I can't believe you would try to hurt Luna... I hate you, Father!"

"H-hate me?!"

The blood drained from Arnold's face, leaving it ashen and looking as if he might keel over then and there. The only thing that held him up were Luna's threads, capturing him in the stance he'd taken when he'd tried to attack.

Luna huffed at the sight of the quarreling father and daughter.

"Hmph... I suppose I'll forgive you this time."

Though she spoke a bit arrogantly toward her Arselian allies, Luna withdrew the threads that had stopped Arnold in his tracks.

Finally free to move again, Arnold staggered on the spot before sinking into a chair. Letting reason take over once more, Arnold praised Luna's skills.

"...You only used those threads to prevent me from moving this time. Are they usually used to kill...?"

"They are. It's quite easy to send your head flying if I wrap them round your neck."

"This girl certainly loves to spout cruel things... Can you not see that Lexia's disdain has already half finished me...?"

"Why the hell should I care?"

For the first time ever, Owen found himself silently agreeing with Luna.

Lexia, with her arms folded, further pressures Arnold.

"So, Father, I presume that you now understand how strong Luna is."

"Yes, I do... I believe that she is strong enough to guard you. What is your opinion on the matter, Owen?"

"Your Majesty! I have no issue with it. Uhhh...she's a renowned and skilled assassin from the Guild of Darkness, so if someone like her is protecting the princess from other potential threats, it makes me feel very reassured."

"Understood."

Arnold nodded and looked again toward Luna with a sudden majesty completely at odds with the devastated wreck he'd been until just then.

"What is your name?"

"It's Luna."

"Very well, Luna. From now on, I recognize you as Lexia's trusted bodyguard. Please do your utmost to protect my darling daughter."

"Yes, Your Majesty!"

Luna bowed her head for the first time and, at Arnold's urging, left the room along with Lexia.

"Phew... It's a hard blow to take when your daughter says that she

hates you..."

"It's because you spoil her, Your Majesty."

"Well, she is very cute! ...But let's put that conversation to one side for now. Owen, that Luna girl is no ordinary assassin, is she? You said she was skilled, and I think she is indeed very strong."

"She is. In the Guild of Darkness, she was known as the Headhunter."

"Her?! She's the infamous Headhunter?! Well, I daresay she's skilled enough... And you say that boy from the Weald had something to do with her failure?"

"Yes, Your Majesty. The boy who stopped the assassination—Yuuya is his name—held Luna in his custody until we headed back to the capital. I'm not sure about the details, but at one of Lexia's fairly unreasonable requests, he allowed her to follow him as he carried Luna back to his house in the Weald, where they—"

"Excuse me?! Lexia went to a man's house without supervision?!"

"Uhhh...Your Majesty?"

The king's veil of regality vanished in an instant, replaced by an angry glare.

"I'm sure this isn't the case, but you're not about to tell me that she spent the night there with him, are you?"

"....."

The cogs in Owen's brain whirled as fast as they could as he desperately tried to think of a response.

But it seemed as if silence was the correct course after all, as a dark smile danced on Arnold's lips.

"He may have saved Lexia's life...but I don't remember ever saying that I would spare him. His blood shall turn to rust on the blade of Grackle."

"That would prove very problematic, Your Majesty! Especially as nothing happened!"

"And you know this for certain, do you?! When you weren't even there?!"

"Gah! Can you please decide whether to be calm and collected or up in arms and stick to it...?!"

Owen was already at his wit's end when it came to Arnold, who until now had managed to maintain a calm outward appearance despite his anger.

"A-anyway! Luna's assassination attempt delayed us by a whole day, and Lord Yuuya was no longer able to visit."

"Hmph...then when will I finally meet this Lord Yuuya? Is this not disrespectful? Hmm?!"

"As I told you previously, Lord Yuuya appears to be some kind of noble or royal family member from another land. If we don't tread

lightly, this could lead to an international incident! Furthermore, do you honestly believe you could cut down an enemy who resides in the Weald?”

“Grrr...”

Arnold’s expression changed to one of genuine frustration.

Owen saw this and breathed out a sigh.

“...In any case, I told him to come to the palace as soon as is convenient, so I believe he may come in the not-so-distant future.”

“Very well... Then let us wait a little longer.”

—That’s how, without suspecting a thing, Yuuya became the sworn enemy of the king of Arselia.

—As Arnold and Owen discussed Yuuya, more speculation about Yuuya swirled elsewhere in the capital.

“...Your Highness, there is something I must inform you of...”

“What is it?”

In a separate room of the palace, a hooded man was reporting to another man—the first prince of the Kingdom of Arselia, Reigar.

Reigar put a glass of alcohol to his lips uninterestedly but soon froze when the informant added, “It’s about the person from the Weald.”

“...What?”

Reigar’s eyes widened slightly, and he prompted the hooded man to go on.

“Did you find anything?”

“Yes, my prince... It appears that someone does indeed live in that forest.”

“What did you just say?!”

Reigar appeared stunned.

“Are you telling me that someone truly lives in the Weald? And there is no possibility of a mistake?”

“No mistake, Your Highness. When Lexia was first attacked, we all found it very curious how she escaped the Weald as the only survivor, but now it seems that someone may have helped her.”

“...Say that someone does live out in the Weald, how did you come by such information? I find it hard to believe that my father would not restrict gossip about something of that nature.”

“It seems that this person was invited to the palace recently. Princess Lexia took a whole host of guards, including Owen, to escort them here from the entrance to the Weald. It was from the chattering of a few among this escort that I derived this information.”

“I see... If you had attempted to eavesdrop on Owen, you most likely would have been caught, but the grunt soldiers probably had no idea you were there. Likewise, they were probably all sworn to secrecy... But who keeps their guard up when they’re talking to

people privy to the same knowledge?"

While surprised by this information, Reigar accepted it.

But the hooded man reluctantly continued.

"There's one last thing you should know..."

"What is it? Are you telling me there's more?"

"Yes... It seems that one nobleman who supports your claim hired an assassin from the Guild of Darkness to kill your sister..."

"Oh? How thoughtful. So what happened?"

"The assassin they sent after the princess was none other than the Headhunter, yet..."

"Why the grim tone? If the guild sent out an assassin that skilled, surely they must have succeeded."

The hooded man could tell that Reigar's mood was souring, but he went on nonetheless.

"...The Headhunter's attempt to assassinate the princess was seemingly blocked by the person who lives in the Weald, and moreover, the Headhunter is now apparently employed as the princess's bodyguard..."

"How could this be allowed to happen?!"

Reigar jumped to his feet in a rage.

"And the Headhunter?! You're telling me that not only was their assassination attempt thwarted, but now they're even working for my sister...!"

"My apologies, Your Highness. That's all I know..."

"You useless wretch!"

Reigar shouted in frustration, then began wandering the room restlessly.

"Dammit... It was bad enough having Owen constantly hovering around, but now she's guarded by the Headhunter, too?! That makes it even harder to strike...!"

After pacing for a while, Reigar suddenly stopped.

"It's no use. I had planned to save that strategy for later, but..."

Reigar tuned back to the hooded man and stared at him coldly.

"You. Did you not say that this character from the Weald is due to visit the palace?"

"Yes, Your Highness."

"When? Are they already here?"

"No. It seems as though they were unable to make the trip this time, but they will come soon."

"I see. Then I have some time."

As Reigar began to mull things over, the hooded man asked a question.

"Ummm... What are you thinking, Your Highness?"

Reigar shot the man an evil smile.

"I was thinking that maybe it's about time my father retires..."

"What?"

In other words, Reigar intended to kill his father, Arnold, the king of Arselia.

Reigar laughed as the hooded man appeared shocked and at a loss for words at the prince's intended treason.

"Why so surprised? I'll be king one day anyway. I'm just moving the timeline forward a bit."

"I-it's just that assassinating the king is such a risk. They may not be as talented as Owen, but His Majesty surrounds himself with plenty of capable guards. And the king himself is very strong... If this plot were to be exposed, your own position would also be in danger, Your Highness."

"Have I mentioned anything about getting my own hands dirty?"

"Huh?"

The man's eyes grew round in surprise.

"It's true. Both my father and his guards are strong. But that shouldn't be a problem for you, should it?"

"Well...maybe not, but..."

"Besides, I will lend you one of my secret weapons. I don't know if it will have any effect on Owen or the Headhunter, but it will most likely work on my father's guards."

"Wh-what is this...secret weapon...?" the hooded man fearfully asked Reigar, who smiled daringly.

"Have you heard of an Anti-Magic Field? Once activated, no one can use any magic within it, and it blocks all interference from outside. I have one."

"What?!"

"Are you listening? If you use one of those, my father's guards will all be rendered useless. He's so proud of that sword arm of his that he only keeps wizards by his side. So if you use the Anti-Magic Field, the only people you need to worry about are Owen, the Headhunter, and the king. And you should be able to deal with them, shouldn't you?"

"It's possible if none of the wizards or Owen can intervene, b-but if we fail, your position will be—"

"We can always blame someone else."

"What?!"

"Do you follow? The person from the Weald is going to visit soon. All we have to do is use them as a scapegoat and kill them. If we then frame Lexia as the mastermind behind the whole thing, we can have her tried as well. They'll be the outsider and the princess who brought the outsider here. If the king were to die, would it not be they who are the obvious suspects?"

"....."

“Besides, when that person from the Weald does show up, they’ll definitely be granted an audience. Probably with as few in attendance as possible. No one’s going to believe a person who claims they’re from the Weald, and even if it is true, it will all be covered up at first, so they’re not poached by another country. Then, at a convenient opportunity, it will be made public. That’s when I’ll be able to...ask my father to take his leave. Using the Anti-Magic Field, you and your companions will attack and put an end to his reign. Or if you’d prefer to just kill everyone without pinning the blame on some plot by Lexia and the outsider, my testimony will still stand. All I have to say is that savage from the Weald got violent or something else to that effect.”

A dark smile played upon Reigar’s lips as he told his story, and the hooded figure stood there speechless.

“Now that we have a plan of action, we must prepare. Even if that person from the Weald is not yet on their way, we have no time to lose. You shall devise the means to make sure the king is dead. Failure is not an option.”

“...Yes, Your Highness.”

“Heh-heh-heh... I don’t know who you are or where you came from, but you’ll make a fine stepping stone.”

—Before long, it was no longer just a welcoming hand, but a threatening hand that extended out to Yuuya from the capital.

As the topic of Yuuya spread through the other world, the magazine featuring Ousei Academy went on sale on Earth.

The public’s interest was first piqued because it featured the famous Ousei Academy, but it was the pictures within that made the biggest splash in the end. It didn’t take long for people to connect the snapshots of Yuuya jumping high to hit the tennis ball with the person who featured in the photo shoot with Miu.

Yet Yuuya remained oblivious. Thanks to that magazine feature, it started to spread that Yuuya was a student at Ousei Academy, and soon enough people started to stand at the school gates and wait for him to leave at the end of the day.

Some talent agencies had already realized that another talent agency was mentioned in the feature and either lamented they were too late to hire Yuuya, under the impression that he had a contract with an agency already, or, as was the case for the more stubborn ones, bided their time under the assumption that Yuuya would soon come to them himself seeking better terms.

As Yuuya’s popularity skyrocketed with a single article and he went viral all over TV and the internet, he gained new fans by the minute without even realizing it.

Watching it all unfold, the talent agency boss’s lips curled into a

dark smile.

“Heh-heh-heh... Yuuya may not have signed a contract with us, but if we keep laying the groundwork, then he won’t be able to sign with any other agency, either. And now that he’s getting so big, his introduction into the celebrity world is only a matter of time.”

As the boss muttered to herself with a copy of the magazine in question in her hands, she was suddenly struck by her next vision.

“Now, since we’ve come this far...all that’s left is for a major debut...”

And thus, the groundwork was steadily laid for a blissfully ignorant Yuuya.

It’s the day after the Ball Tournament.

They’ve given us the day off, which means, all in all, we’ve got a three-day weekend, so I’ve decided to use this opportunity to finally visit the royal palace.

Or rather, if I don’t make the most of this opportunity, I don’t see another presenting itself anytime soon.

Master Rabbit pays a visit to my house in the other world just as we’re about to set off, and when I tell him where we’re going, he simply says, *“I see. If you have an appointment, then you must go. Besides, I have taught you the basics now. The question of how you continue to train is up to you.”*

So now I have a vacation from training as well.

“Which means that today we’re off to the capital!”

“Woof!”

“Oink!”

Night raises his front paws, and Akatsuki his front hooves, to celebrate. Yeah, these guys are being just as cute as usual.

“Oh, but...I don’t have any of this world’s money... What should I do?”

When I stop and think about it, this’ll be my first time in a town in this world. If I need money for anything, I won’t be able to buy it. If I can get hold of one, I’d like a map to Montress, and if I can’t get a map, it would at least be great if there’s something in this world that’s equivalent to a bus or a taxi, but I’d still need money for that as well.

I have some materials in my Item Box found in the Weald that I think I can exchange for money, but I’m not sure what I should and shouldn’t sell.

I know it well, the way Owen is acting tells me that he knows it well, and the sage knew it so well that he wrote it in his book: Everyone in this world knows how strong the monsters that live in the Weald are.

If I try to sell those items in a town, I’m going to get some funny

looks.

“Hmm... I wonder how I can make some money...”

The door to this world has an effect that allows me to use Money Conversion to switch items I don't need, like Magic Stones, for Japanese yen, but it doesn't work the other way around.

I'm pondering what I should do when it dawns on me.

“Hmm? If I can turn stuff from this world into yen with the door, but I can't turn yen and other things from Earth into this world's money in the same way...what if I sold Japanese stuff here?”

“Woof?”

I absentmindedly ask Night and Akatsuki for their advice, but both simply cock their heads at me. You guys probably don't understand a word I'm saying, do you?

But I don't think it's such a bad idea. Just because I can't use the door for Money Conversion, doesn't mean that I can't convert stuff into money by selling it at the stores here.

Items made in this world, like magic and weapons, aren't normal fare on Earth, so I can't really do anything but use Money Conversion on them with the door. Although things like clothes, armor, and tableware could probably be sold as antiques.



I don't know how advanced this world is, but going by the things the sage left in my house, I kind of imagine it to be like civilization was in the Middle Ages.

If I bring things from Earth that fit that time period and don't run on electricity, I should be able to sell them.

So...the kinds of things from Earth that I can sell here are things like...peppercorns? People say that used to be as valuable as gold in those times on Earth. Then there are things like mirrors and soap. The mirrors of this era probably don't reflect as well as the ones from mine, and soap smells great while getting rid of stains.

Still, the drop items in this world are all based on different concepts here, so I have no idea how well stuff from Earth is going to be received.

"...Well, there's no point in worrying about it just yet. I should just prepare what I can for now."

I have quite a lot of yen thanks to the drop items I found in this world, so I buy ten jars of peppercorns, ten bars of soap, and ten hand mirrors from a local store.

"Okay, well, if we run out, then I can always swing back home!"

"Woof."

"Oink."

And so we finally set off for the nearest town.

I've led Lexia and the others here before, and I regularly hunt the monsters near the entrance to the forest, so we don't encounter too much trouble on our way out of the Weald.

After a while of just taking down any Goblin Elite we meet on the road, Night discovers a monster I've never encountered before.

"Woof! Woof, woof!"

"Huh? What's the matter?"

"Woof."

I look in the direction that Night is pointing and see a fluffy, snow-white sheep covered in wool languidly eating some grass.

After eating for a while, it lies down on its side defenselessly and drifts off to sleep...although it's still nibbling the grass around it.

"Wh-what's with this sheep...?"

I activate my Identify skill to take a look.

Sleep Sheep

Level: 400, **Mana:** 10000, **Attack:** 7000, **Defense:** 8000,
Agility: 3000, **Intelligence:** 10000, **Luck:** 500

Skills: Sleep Magic (R), Rush (N), Sleep Recovery (SR),
Detect Mana (R)

Its stats are nothing to write home about. When I first came here, I

would have thought it was really powerful, but after undertaking the rabbit's training, I've fought monsters a hundred times stronger than this, and now that I've evolved, even my own stats are better.

Just going by the fact that the only stats it has that reach 10,000 are its mana and intelligence stats, I can assume this monster mainly attacks with magic. And when I look at its skills, I'm proven right. With a skill like Sleep Magic, I take it that this monster is related to sleeping. I've never seen a Sleep Recovery skill before. This thing's a bit weird.

While I think about its skills, the sheep's eyes suddenly blink open and stare right at me.

It looks like its Detect Mana skill has seen through my One with Nature skill. This isn't good... If I'm going to run into monsters that can see through One with Nature, I'm going to have to be more careful from now on.

As I decide that, the sheep quickly gets up and rushes toward us.

Compared to the King Mithril Boar, its charge is very slow, so I decide to take my time to slay it.

I take out the Void Bow, nock an arrow, and pull back.

I should probably aim for the sheep's torso, but I somehow get the feeling that if I aim there, my arrow will just bounce off it, so I rule that out. I could probably take it out with a kick, but since it's rushing toward me, there's no need to place myself in unnecessary danger. I may still be in training for kicking, but I want to train with my other weapons, too.

Then, as if to double down on my original idea, my intuition from using the Mind's Eye+ skill tells me that I definitely shouldn't aim for the sheep's torso.

When I use the same skill to find its weak point, it's indicating the forehead, so that's what I go with.

I hold my breath...then I let go.

"Hah!"

"...?! Ba-baaaaaaaal!"

Combined with the force of the sheep's rush toward me, the arrow penetrates deep into the sheep's forehead, hard enough to lodge itself into its brain.

The sheep cries out and struggles, but eventually disappears into motes of light.

"Phew... I managed to take it out with just one long-range attack."

"Woof."

As I walk over to where the drop items have landed, I see a stone around the size of the palm of my hand, some meat, and—a futon.

"What the hell?"

The first thing I do is use my Identify skill on the Magic Stone. It

says that it's B-rank, so the sheep must have been B-class.

Meat of the Sleepy Sheep—Meat from a Sleep Sheep. Known for its sticky texture, this meat has a strong flavor that people either love or hate. However, this meat is very famous for being an extremely popular bar snack when smoked.

Wool of the Sleepy Sheep—Wool from a Sleep Sheep. With excellent heat-retaining and moisture-absorbing qualities, it is extremely comfortable to the touch, and bedding and clothes made with this wool are very popular among the nobility. However, Sleep Sheep are very rare, so this wool fetches a sky-high price.

Horn of the Sleepy Sheep—A horn from a Sleep Sheep. While this horn cannot be used to make weapons, when powdered, it makes a powerful sleep aid. It is sometimes utilized by people who wish to euthanize themselves.

These all look kinda hard to use.

I mean, some people like the taste of the meat, so that's okay, but I'm not so sure about the wool and the horn... Especially the horn. Its uses are quite unsettling.

"Oh well, the futon is probably more of an issue than any of these things."

"Oink? Oink!"

It just looks like a normal futon with a comforter.

But after Akatsuki charges into it, he becomes visibly lethargic, and that's when I understand that this is no ordinary futon.

In any case, if I don't check it out properly, I won't know anything else about it, so I activate my Identify skill.

Futon of Supreme Bliss—A rare drop item acquired from a Sleep Sheep. This futon is always clean and never needs washing. Warm in the winter, but never hot and sticky in the summer, this futon always feels soft and comfortable. It can also be used outdoors. Comes with two modes: Sleep-In Mode and Restful Sleep Mode. When Sleep-In Mode is selected, the futon becomes so comfortable it's like sleeping in heaven, and when Restful Sleep Mode is selected, you are lulled into a pleasant sleep where you can experience the best night's slumber of your life before waking up instantly refreshed the next morning. This futon will raise your strength and mana very slightly while you doze.

"These daily necessity items always deliver, huh?"

I'm never surprised anymore; this series of items is just the best.

And Akatsuki's grogginess is convincing me even more of its supposed performance.

It's really lucky that I can use this outside, too.

"This kinda feels promising."

"Woof."

"Oink..."

"...Akatsuki, we're going now."

"Oink?! Oi-oink..."

Akatsuki reluctantly leaves the futon and plods over to my side.

"Don't feel too sad, Akatsuki. All three of us can sleep in it again tonight."

"Woof!"

"Oink? Oink!"

After I make this promise to them, we head a little farther and finally reach the entrance to the forest.

"We're finally here!"

"Woof!"

"Oink!"

Ahhh, I can't decide if it feels like it's taken a long time or a short time to make it this far...

After that, we run into another Sleep Sheep and, since it's in a herd, acquire ten more futons. Hmm, maybe we could just pick these up ad infinitum...or maybe not...but for now, at least we have some spares...

...Hmm? Now that I think about it, we would never have been attacked by a herd of Sleep Sheep if we had just used teleportation magic to get here instantaneously...

.....

"Yeah, that's one of the best parts of doing this! Definitely."

"Woof?"

"Oink?"

As Night and Akatsuki watch me nodding as if trying to convince myself of the fact, they cock their heads, confused.

"All right, I think Owen and the others headed out...that way."

I do wonder whether there's anything out there in the opposite direction to which they went, but we persevere toward the closest town to the Weald. I heard that's where Owen and the others rested when Luna was recovering at my place.

So let's make some of this world's money and head for the capital.

"All right, we're moving out!"

"Woof!"

"Oink!"

And we take our first steps toward my first town in this world.

After walking part of the way, we see something that looks a little like a town in the distance.

“Huh, I wonder if that’s the town Owen was telling me about.”

“Woof.”

“Oink.”

Since we’ve finally reached civilization in this world, I start walking a little quicker toward our destination.

That’s when I see a line of people in front of an enormous castle gate, the likes of which you would never see in Japan.

It looks like they’re doing some kind of inspection of the people coming in.

When I go to line up like everyone else, it somehow feels like a lot of people are watching me.

For a moment, I wonder if they’re staring at Night and Akatsuki, but after I look at the two of them as well, I realize that it seems to be me whom they’re gawping at.

I wonder if I look funny. I left the Bloodstained Ogre armor at home so that I don’t scare anyone, and I’m wearing a shirt and a pair of pants left behind by the sage instead, but...maybe my fly is down or something.

To be fair, everyone’s just staring—they’re not doing anything in particular, so I decide to ignore the looks for now.

I’m actually quite surprised about something myself. Lots of people seem to be coming here in horse-drawn carriages.

“I saw that carriage Lexia rode off in last time, but that was from so far away. They’re way more impressive up close. I’ve ridden in a rickshaw before, but you don’t see so many horse-drawn carriages around these days, so I’ve never had the chance to ride in one.”

I glance around, careful not to stare so long that it becomes rude, until I find someone with a very strange appearance, and my eyes widen in shock.

Why? Because there’s a pair of animal ears sprouting from their head!

What are those?! Cat ears? No, dog ears?! Well, whatever they are, they’re amazing! Oh, and they have a tail, too!

I wonder if that’s pretty common here. No one’s even batting an eye.

I guess you see some people in Japan, especially in Akihabara, wearing cat ears sometimes, but the ears aren’t real.

I still haven’t even entered my first town in this world, but I’m already super excited.

I don’t even mind the waiting as much as I normally would.

Eventually, it’s my turn to enter the gate.

“All right, next... Oh?!”

“U-um...is something wrong?”

As soon as I arrive in front of the armor-clad official, he shows the same look of surprise that everyone else did while I was waiting.

“No, it’s fine. I was just a little startled. So do you have any identification for me?”

“What?”

Identification...?

.....

I don’t have anyyyyy!

I should have thought about this earlier! I need a passport to travel abroad, right? Even though I’ve never left Japan!

What should I do? Are they going to arrest me if I don’t have any...? I have my academy ID, but I can’t show them that!

As I freak out, the official just laughs.

“From that expression, I would say that you don’t. But if you don’t, then you don’t. It’s not an issue, so don’t worry about it.”

“A-are you sure?”

“Yeah. I’ll just have you answer some questions about the purpose of your visit, and then you can be on your way.”

Phееew!

That was scary! I thought I was screwed for sure!

When the official sees the look of genuine relief on my face, he laughs again.

“You don’t have to be so nervous, you know. I’d just like you to tell me your name and why you’ve come here today, and then there will be a little test.”

“Oh, well, my name is Yuuya Tenjou, and I’ve come here to sightsee.”

Yeah, I think I’d classify my visit as sightseeing. I have to leave pretty soon for the capital, but I’d still like to take a little look around here.

“I see...and are these two with you?”

“Oh yeah. This is Night, and that’s Akatsuki.”

“Woof.”

“Oink.”

They raise paw and hoof to say hello as I introduce them.

“These fellows are quite clever, eh? Well, I don’t see any problem letting you into the town. It’s just the test left... Can you touch this crystal for me?”

The official holds out a round crystal, similar to the crystal balls of fortune tellers.

I don’t really understand what’s going on, but since this seems like part of the registration, I do as I’m told and touch it.

The crystal immediately glows bright blue.

“Blue... So no criminal history, then... All right, you’re free to enter.

I hope you enjoy your stay here.”

I guess they use that thing to pick out criminals, then.

I’m not so sure how a crystal can tell if you’ve committed a crime or not...but I bet it would still be pretty useful to have.

If we had those on Earth, I bet there’d be fewer false charges.

...Although it doesn’t tell you what crime someone committed, so policing still wouldn’t be easy.

That doesn’t change the fact that it would still be useful, though. This world is really amazing sometimes.

Feeling renewed appreciation for this world, I enter the town with Night and Akatsuki.

“Well, now that we’re in the town, we’d better find somewhere to make some money.”

Even though I said I was coming here to sightsee, I don’t even have the money for that yet.

“I wonder if there’s anywhere that will take the stuff I bought in Japan.”

I take out a jar of peppercorns and use my Identify skill on it.

Peppercorns—Peppercorns harvested on Earth. The quality of these peppercorns surpasses that of the peppercorns harvested in this world, and one jar is worth at least 5 Gold here. If sold to a merchant guild, you can bargain for 15 Gold, but between 5 and 10 Gold is a good price.

“That was a more detailed explanation than I was expecting!”

It even gave me the price I should sell at! I’m impressed!

I don’t understand all of it, but my Identify skill has given me an even better answer than I needed.

I guess Gold is the currency they use here. I’m not sure how much they’re worth, but it’s good to know.

Plus, my skill told me what I needed the most. Now I know where I can sell my wares. It sounds like if I find a merchant guild, then I’ll be able to off-load my goods there.

“All right, Night, Akatsuki! Let’s go find a merchant guild!”

“Woof.”

“Oink.”

Unfortunately, I still don’t know my way around, so I end up having to ask the soldiers posted by the castle gate where I might find one.

Just like I thought, the soldiers at the gate play a similar role to the police in my own world and kindly point me in the right direction.

After I follow the route I was given, a tidy, wooden building comes into view.

Lots of people and horse-drawn carriages laden with cargo are

busily coming and going, and I start to wonder if this might be the trade and distribution center for this town.

People are staring at me again for some reason, just like they did when I was lining up in front of the gate, and even after I head inside the building, I'm greeted by even more looks.

I glance around the room, still feeling a little uncomfortable about the stares, until I see what looks like a desk. I head on over.

"Um, excuse me?"

"Y-yes? How can I help you?"

After initially looking at me with some surprise, the woman behind the desk quickly puts on her salesperson smile and asks what I need.

"Well, I have something I'd like to sell..."

"Sigh... I'm very sorry, sir, but is this your first time trading with the merchant guild?"

"Yes. This is actually my first time in this town, and I don't have any money on me, so I thought I would sell what I could first."

The woman behind the desk listens and nods.

"Understood. There is a requirement to register with our organization prior to sale. Will there be any issues regarding that?"

There it is. I've got to register. It'll be fine as long as I don't have to pay any money, but...

I anxiously ask the woman behind the desk for more information.

"Does it cost anything? Is there something I have to do once I'm signed up?"

"No, there's no special handling fee or anything like that. In addition, by being affiliated with a guild, you'll be provided with identification, and furthermore, you may also make use of the facilities at other guilds. And while it is possible to be expelled from a guild for misconduct, there are no other particular obligations."

I see. Then there are no real disadvantages to joining.

Plus, I'll be able to get ahold of some identification, which will be nice.

"Furthermore, guilds exist in lots of different countries, but our organization has a strict noninterference policy. Of course, each branch observes the laws of each country and offers full cooperation in the case of an emergency in exchange for allowing a branch to be built there, but we can also bypass any unwarranted interference from that country as well.

"Wow."

I can't help but voice my amazement. They sound like a great organization.

On the flip side, they'd probably make dangerous enemies... It's not like I'm planning on doing anything naughty, though, so I'll be all right. Even their reach is a little terrifying to think about.

Anyway, from what I've gathered, there are no real downsides to joining a guild, and even if there were, I can't sell my peppercorns unless I register, so I don't have much of a choice.

"Thank you for your explanation. In that case, I would like to join."

"Great. Then please fill out this form."

The woman passes me a strange kind of paper that looks different from what we have in my world. It looks dry and difficult to write on.

Plus, she's given me a quill for a pen... I've never used one of these before.

What do I do? Am I supposed to dip it in this ink...?

After battling with a pen and paper I'm not used to using, I finally complete the form.

All I had to write was my name and where I'm from, and while the name was easy enough, I was at a complete loss for what to write in the birthplace field.

In the end, I just wrote *Japan*.

"I'm done."

"Okay...Mr. Yuuya. Is this Japan the name of a country?"

"Yes. It's a small island...to the east."

On Earth at least.

"I see. So you're not from this continent? Please be aware that if you travel to another continent besides this one, there may not be any guild branches close by. Apart from that, I see no other issues, so please consider yourself registered. Here is your guild card."

The woman passes me a plate that looks like it's made of a material similar to iron.

My name and a single star are carved into the metal.

"If you look at your guild card, then you should see a star alongside your name. That star indicates your ranking within the guild. One star qualifies you as a traveling merchant, but you cannot open any stalls or open an official store within the town. But you can still sell within places like the merchant guild. If you ever want to open an outdoor stall, you'll need two stars, and for a store, it's three."

"How do I increase the number of stars I have?"

"For the merchant guild, your number of stars increases alongside the amount you contribute to the guild. If you have a stall or a store, for example, a certain amount of the profits will be offered to the guild. When you start with one star, you can convert the worth of the goods you sell directly to us into contributions, so it's not too difficult to get up to three stars. But four stars and above requires merchant trust, the establishment of new sales channels, and the development of new products, and the standards for these are quite strict."

I get it... Well, I'm fine with being a qualified traveling merchant, so I don't need to think too hard about the rest.

“Now then, thank you for your patience thus far. Could you please show me the items you wish to sell today?”

“Oh yes,” I respond, grabbing the peppercorns out of my Item Box.

For some reason, the woman’s eyes grow as wide as saucers.

“Oh, you have an Item Box...”

“Yes?”

“Oh, s-sorry for staring. It’s just that it’s so unusual to meet someone who can use the Item Box skill...but what a great thing to have for a merchant! You really are blessed!”

“I—I am?”

What the heck?

I never realized that Item Box was such a rare skill...

But it’s not like *no one else* has one, so I’m not in too much trouble, I think to myself as I hand the peppercorns over the desk to the woman.

“Wh-whaaaaaaaat?!”

She’s in total shock.

As I look at the astonished woman in surprise, she bows her head.

“M-my apologies! I’ve never seen such high-quality peppercorns before...nor a jar this beautiful...”

“Y-you haven’t?”

So the peppercorns on Earth *are* good quality. And apparently, even this kind of jar is rare.

“Excuse me, but how many of these do you have?”

“Hmm? Errr...I have ten right now, but if you can give me some time, I can get more if you’d like.”

“O-okay... Please excuse me for a moment. I need to confirm something with the guild master.”

The woman bows again, opens the door behind her, and leaves.

What’s a guild master? I wonder.

“Hmm... Don’t you guys feel like this is becoming a bigger deal than we first thought?”

“Woof?”

“Oink?”

Night and Akatsuki look so cute when they’re confused, and it quickly makes me feel less stressed.

What I would come to know later about this meeting at the merchant guild is that the reception desks use a special magical instrument that blocks others from being able to hear the content of our conversation.

That’s why no one else overheard what we were saying, despite the woman’s loud gasp of surprise.

For merchants, information is everything, so the tools available in this world really do come in handy. Just like the bath set I get so much use out of.

After I spend a while waiting and zoning out, the woman from behind the desk returns, this time accompanied by a middle-aged gentleman with white hair and a white, neatly trimmed beard.

“Is this him?”

“Yes! Sorry to keep you waiting, Mr. Yuuya. This is Reinhart. He runs this merchant guild.”

The gentleman greets me politely.

“Hello, sir. I am Reinhart, the guild master.”

“Hello. My name is Yuuya Tenjou.”

“Hmm... What a strange-sounding name. What would you like me to call you? Mr. Yuuya Tenjou?”

“Oh, no! Please just call me Yuuya. No need to be formal or use my family name.”

I hope I’m explaining myself clearly here. The name order in Japan is the opposite of the order used here, but I’m trying to adjust. I think foreign countries on Earth use the same style as them, though.

Maybe it’s rude to be so casual, but Reinhart doesn’t seem to mind.

“Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! You’re a funny one! And where is Japan? I’ve never heard of this place before... My work often obligates me to travel to faraway cities on this and that continent, but I have no idea where this Japan might be.”

“Ummm... It’s a small island to the east.”

“I see... Hmm. One look at you tells me that you belong to the upper classes, but...”

“No, no, no! I’m just an average citizen.”

Why would he think that I’m upper-class...? When I think of upper-class people, it’s people like Kaori. Besides, for someone like me who’s seen a real-life princess like Lexia, I feel a bit embarrassed that someone would think that I’m in the same social strata as her.

While I ponder the subject of class, both Reinhart and the woman from behind the desk look at me in surprise.

“O-oh. So you aren’t a nobleman?”

“No. Why do you think that?” I ask innocently, to which Reinhart and the woman glance at each other with awkward smiles.

“Hmm... Well, it’s not that strange for the upper classes to disguise their identities. If you say that you’re a commoner, though, who are we to argue?”

“Huh?”

What the hell? Are they doubting me for some reason? I told them I’m not nobility.

I stare at them blankly as Reinhart picks up the peppercorns I brought.

“Th-these are—...! ...Yuuya, are you sure you want to keep your status a secret?”

"I told you, I'm a commoner!"

They really do doubt me! And to take me for a nobleman of all things?!

I mean, there are so many things to be suspicious of in the world, but I've never been accused of being a nobleman before!

Thinking about it, though, I am having a surprisingly valuable experience right now.

Still, if you're going to lie, why would you say that you're a commoner rather than a nobleman? Maybe I have to look more miserable to show them that I really am poor. Even then, I might not be noble, but I'd still like to act with dignity.

Reinhart and the woman from behind the desk keep flashing resigned looks at me that scream things like *All right, fine, if he wants to hide his identity, so be it*, which I don't know what to make of.

In any case, Reinhart inspects the peppercorns and the jar they're in from every angle before eventually sighing.

"...I've handled a lot of goods over the years, but this the first time I've seen pepper of this quality. I was told that not only do you have nine more of these, but that you can prepare more given time... Is that correct?"

"Yes."

"Hmm..."

After Reinhart thinks for a while, he sends the woman behind the desk to fetch him a large leather bag.

"Now, about these peppercorns... I'll take the lot for one hundred Gold."

"One hundred Gold?! ...Wait is that good?"

Reinhart and the woman look at me blankly. Sorry, I don't know.

Well, my Identify skill said that I should expect between 5 and 10 Gold for each item, so I'm getting top dollar.

I don't know why it was valued so high, but it's lucky for a poor boy like me that it was.

"R-right. You're not from this land, are you, Yuuya? I suppose that's why you don't understand the value of our currency...so let me explain it for you simply. We have four monetary denominations in this country. From lowest to highest value, it goes Copper, Silver, Gold, and then Platinum. Each higher denomination is made up of one hundred coins from the one below it, so one hundred Copper is equivalent to one Silver."

Oh, that's pretty easy to understand.

"In this country, your average four-person family requires approximately five Gold per year to live comfortably, so you have just made enough money to live twenty-something years without having to work again."

“.....”

What did he just say?

A four-person family can survive for one year on just 5 Gold. So I don't have to work for twenty years?

But I'm just one person. I'm not a family of four. So I would need only 1 Gold and change every year...

Meaning that I don't have to lift a finger for another century.

.....

“Wh-whaaaaat?!”

It's my turn to be shocked this time.

“One hundred Gold isn't that much to get excited over. I'm sure you handle far greater sums in your day-to-day life.”

“No, I don't!”

While it's true that on Earth, all the drop items I've exchanged have left me a little better off, I was born poor. I don't know what to do with this kind of money! Being poor is all I know!

“Anyway, please be aware that with this sale, you've ranked up to three stars.”

“What?!”

I was already content enough with the 100 Gold, but to rank up within the guild, as well...

The woman from behind the desk takes back my brand-new guild card and does some sort of processing with it.

“It takes one Gold's worth of sales to rank up to two stars and ten Gold to get three. I touched upon this when we were talking earlier, but the fourth star will depend on your future sales. But that also comes with the extra condition that you do fifty Gold worth of business with us... Since you've only just registered, it'll be a while before you have the required merchant reputation, but you've already met the fifty Gold condition, so once you start generating sales, then you can get your fourth star.”

I see... Still, I didn't expect to reach three whole stars on my first day.

I don't have any plans to open anything right now, but at least this means that I now have the right to open up a stall or a store if I want to in the future.

“Will that be all?” Reinhart asks.

I'm still reeling when he hands me my guild card with two more stars engraved upon it.

I snap back to reality and remember that I need a map.

“Oh, right. Yes. I've sold all that I would like to today, but...I was wondering if you would be able to sell me a map to the capital.”

“Hmm? A map, eh...and to the capital no less. Do you have business or something there?”

“Yes. I have a friend in the capital who I have promised to see... I just don’t know the way there, so I thought I’d buy a map on the way if I could.”

Reinhart exchanges looks with the woman and then starts to reluctantly explain.

“Look...Yuuya. I don’t know what it’s like in your country, but in this country, the drawing and sale of maps is strictly prohibited.”

“What?! I-it is?!”

I had no idea! I’ve never heard of a rule like that! The woman from behind the desk elaborates further.

“We may not be at war right now, but if war were to break out and a map of our country fell into enemy hands, they could potentially predict our army’s movements. That’s why all the maps made in this country are only made by people like the military.”

“O-oh, I see...”

For someone like me, who has never experienced war, it’s difficult logic to understand.

I guess if the enemy had a map that was detailed enough, then they could definitely use it to place their own troops and to guess the movement of this country’s soldiers.

“That said, not even the government can stop the publication of every single one of them, and there are some adventurers and merchants who have made their own. It would be a serious problem if they were found out, mind you. The punishment is death.”

“Death?!”

The death penalty, huh...? It’s scary that I know so little about the way the law works in this world. I could commit a crime by accident and not even know. I need to familiarize myself with that stuff as early as I can. But now’s not quite the time...!

“If you have a map with even more detail than the one used by the army, then sometimes you might be able to have them buy it off you for a tidy sum if you’re lucky. Although there’s no need to take such a big gamble. You can always save the same as long as you just work hard. So you can do without it, can’t you?”

“Y-yeah.”

“But remember, if you’re planning to go off and be some big adventurer, you can still create and sell maps of dungeons.”

“Dungeons?”

“That’s right. Information about the inside of a dungeon is always an asset to an adventurer and acts as an important lifeline. It’s not against the law to sell that information, and there are even a few merchants who specialize in selling maps of dungeon interiors.”

It looks like there are more jobs unique to this world than I could ever have possibly imagined.

“In any case, it’s against the law to produce and sell maps that aren’t dungeon maps, so you won’t be able to buy one here.”

“I understand.”

I don’t really understand, though...

Owen said that all I had to do was take the road straight from here to the capital, but...

As I worry about how I’m going to get to Montress, the woman behind the desk gives me a piece of advice.

“Ummm, if you’re heading for Montress, you could always use the stagecoach that leaves from the back gate.”

“A stagecoach?”

“Yes. There’s a coach that departs for the capital at regular intervals. Plus, as you’re a member of the guild, you can ride for cheap. That way you can reach the capital without even needing a map!”

“That’s true. Adventurers also tend to accompany the stagecoach as bodyguards, so it’s very safe.”

“I see...”

I thought there might be something that resembles a bus or a taxi service here, and now that I know one definitely exists, there’s no reason not to use it.

Besides, if there are going to be adventurers acting as bodyguards, then it’ll be nice and secure.

Just as I was surprised by the value of the peppercorns, I don’t know a lot about this world, which makes traveling alone in it dangerous.

There are probably monsters on the high road, so from an ordinary person’s point of view, it’s very reassuring to have adventurers around.

“Then I think I’ll take the stagecoach.”

“Very well. The next one is due to depart in thirty minutes, so you should hurry.”

I think my Comprehend Languages skill might be converting the time to thirty minutes automatically in my head... I do wonder if people perceive time here in the same way that we do back on Earth, though.

Reinhart and the woman tell me where to go and how to get there. I say my good-byes and leave the merchant guild.

As he watched Yuuya leave, Reinhart muttered something under his breath.

“...Japan, hmm...”

“Excuse me, guild master. I take it that you’ve never heard of Japan, either?”

The woman looked at Reinhart in surprise, but Reinhart knew what she was talking about.

He had traveled the world ever since he was a young man, cultivating sales channels for food and materials and helping poor villages produce local specialty products that made them rich.

Having been to so many different countries and working his way up to become the current guild master of the merchant guild, Reinhart found it a surprise that there was a country he didn't know about.

"I haven't. But that's what was written on his guild card, so we know that he can't be lying."

She hadn't explained it to Yuuya, but it's impossible for a guild card to lie.

That's why it's more common to not write any information that you don't want revealed in the first place, rather than try to add something that isn't true.

However, concealing things can impact trust, which is important for a lot of merchants' business, so there aren't many merchants who hide anything.

Which makes it surprising that Yuuya, who seemed like he had some kind of special circumstances, chose not to leave the birthplace field blank but to fill it in honestly.

And since the guild card appeared not to contain any lies, Reinhart sighed.

"In any case...I wonder what kind of technology was used to create a jar this transparent."

Due to the constraints of the technology in the other world, glass jars were often warped or full of imperfections. There's no way that they could have produced jars as clear as the ones Yuuya left behind.

"The noblemen and women are all going to be fighting over these."

"What?! D-do you think so?"

"Nobles like to show off. They like to collect rare things and put them on display to boast about their family's wealth."

"Sigh... I don't understand those kinds of people at all."

"I wouldn't worry. I've been at this a long time, and I still don't."

Reinhart smiled wryly at the woman's honesty and shifted his focus back to the glass jars.

"Hmm... He could have done well selling these at auction. Although, it seemed like he was just in a rush to get the money this time, despite having to register with us..."

"I think you're right."

"He could probably have gotten double what we paid him. Next time he comes by the guild, we should let him know."

The woman nodded in agreement and returned to work.

"...We should keep an eye on him. If we can offer some help here and there, then hopefully that'll lead to more profit for us. I'm almost certain a day will come when that boy shakes up the finances of this

world.” Reinhart murmured to himself before returning to work as well.

As I leave the merchant guild and set off to catch the stagecoach from the back gate, I find myself surrounded by the same kinds of people I saw at the castle gate. The kinds of people you’d never see on Earth, like those with beast-like ears protruding from their heads and stout older-looking men who stand no higher than children.

It’s fun taking in the surrounding people and buildings with the heart of someone who’s here for the first time.

“It’s like...it’s even more beautiful than I imagined.”

“Woof.”

“Oink.”

There are trees and flower beds lining the streets, and everywhere is clean.

I guess I was prejudiced because, seeing as I assumed that this culture was based on medieval Europe, I thought the streets would be disgusting.

I’m pretty sure we once learned that human waste used to be thrown out into the streets in those times.

But this town doesn’t seem like that kind of place at all.

There are no weird smells in the air, and everywhere is spotless. I’d say the air is even cleaner than in modern Japan.

I get that it’s probably due to the lack of exhaust emissions or anything here, but still.

“It’s kinda strange, though. I wonder if they have running water and sewers here or something.”

Wondering that as I carry on toward the gate, I suddenly notice small lights floating through the streets.

“Huh?”

Some of the lights are red or blue, and a small number of them are black or gold.

These colored lights seem to be gathering around the trees and flower beds and dancing.

“Hey, what are those things?”

“Woof?”

“Oink?”

When I ask Night and Akatsuki, they don’t seem to know what I’m talking about.

“Huh? Can’t you see them? Look, they’re all gathered around the trees...”

“Woof.”

“Oink. Oink, oink.”

Night whines at me apologetically, but Akatsuki is shaking his head

as if he thinks I'm crazy. Wh-what the...?

I rub my eyes and look again in case they're playing tricks on me, but the balls of light are still there.

I look around to see if anyone else is seeing what I'm seeing, but not one person is paying any notice to them.

Intrigued, I turn toward a green light nearby and activate my Identify skill.

When I do, a message appears indicating that the light is a Wood Spirit and the red one nearby is a Fire Spirit, meaning that all of these lights must be some kind of spirits. For some reason, my Identify skill doesn't show me what skills they have, though... I wonder why.

Hmm... We don't have these spirits in Japan, or at least I've never seen one, but I wonder if the people here are just so used to them that they pay them no attention or if only I can see them after all...

They're probably just so common that no one cares anymore. They're not anywhere near the people, and they don't seem to be giving off any kind of effect.

Convincing myself that must be it, I start walking again.

Eventually, we come to a huge plaza.

It contains a huge fountain and quite a few benches, and it is surrounded by little stalls.

The plaza itself is filled with people enjoying food that they probably bought from those stalls, and children laughing and playing. It's probably where everyone comes to relax.

I don't have time to stay and enjoy it for very long, but after admiring the beautiful town as I stroll, I finally reach my destination.

"I wonder if this is the stagecoach stop that Reinhart and that woman from the merchant guild told us about."

I can see something that looks like it might be a stagecoach, with lots of strong-looking men wearing armor and swords on their belts. There are also some normal people dressed like me gathered around.

As I get closer to the carriage, the man looking after horses notices me.

"Hello and welcome to— Oh, a nobleman?!"

"What?! No!"

I immediately dismiss the man's observation. Why does everyone keep thinking I'm a nobleman?

"Excuse me, but...why do you think I'm a nobleman?"

Before I know it, I'm asking the man that same question, but he just looks at me confused.

"Well...because you're wearing expensive-looking clothes, and there's something about your behavior that just gives off an air of nobility. I thought that perhaps you're a nobleman traveling in disguise."

It seems like most people's assumptions are because of my clothes. I see... It looks like how I would dress myself and behave on Earth makes me seem like high nobility here.

"Well, whatever... Um, are you the driver?"

"I—I am... Are you hoping to ride with us today?"

"Oh yeah. If there's space?"

"Yes, there is."

"Good... And can these two ride with me?"

"Woof."

"Oink."

Night and Akatsuki both hold up front paw and hoof to greet the man, who, while surprised for a second, quickly breaks into a smile.

"You have very adorable friends. There shouldn't be a problem as long as they behave themselves."

"Thank you so much!"

Argh, I forgot about it on the way here, but there was always a risk that they wouldn't let Night and Akatsuki on the stagecoach.

"Everybody on board! We're about to leave!"

Urged on by the driver, the other people journeying the capital like I am sit down in rows.

I take the seat at the end, and the carriage slowly begins to move.

"The capital, huh... I wonder what kind of place it is. I'm looking forward to seeing it."

"Woof!"

"Oink!"

Night and Akatsuki seem to agree, and we settle in as the coach heads onward to the capital.

Epilogue

“Wow!”

“Woof.”

“Oiiink.”

It has been three hours since we left the town.

And now we’ve finally arrived in Montress.

We didn’t experience any monster attacks on the road, and the stagecoach traveled at a pretty fast pace, but I quickly found out that traveling by stagecoach is pretty miserable.

“Wh-who would have thought that riding in a carriage would be *that* uncomfortable...?”

“Woof...”

“Oink.”

Akatsuki doesn’t seem to be fazed by it at all, but Night and I are worn out.

I’ve been thinking of stagecoaches as if they’re the exact equivalents of buses and taxis from my world, and that belief mistakenly extended to the level of comfort I’d be enjoying.

In fact, the roads the stagecoach traversed were not completely paved, and the lack of any rubber on the wheels meant that the resulting vibrations reverberated strongly in the lower back and butt.

Luckily, the pain wasn’t unbearable for me after all the leveling up I did and my evolution, but I don’t think I’d ever put myself through it again. All I could think about was how I was definitely gonna use teleportation magic on the way back.

Since it took three hours to get here by stagecoach, we likely wouldn’t have arrived until it was dark if we’d walked here. We probably could have reached the capital a little earlier by running, but that only works if there’s no one else on the road, and we wanted to stay as incognito as possible. Especially now.

In any case, we’ve arrived. The capital is so huge! It’s easily double the size of the town where we had to line up for inspection outside the gate.

This time, we were questioned in the carriage, but once I showed

the identification I received at the merchant guild, they let me in, no problem.

Once the stagecoach pulls to a stop at its station, I thank the driver and get out of the carriage.

“Whoa! The energy of a capital city is so different!”

The last town was bustling with people, but it pales in comparison to this.

It’s like... I remember going to Tokyo for the first time and being in awe at the amount of people crammed into one city.

Although, unlike Tokyo, when I look around this city, there’s not a single skyscraper in sight. Instead, there are weird stands selling all kinds of strange-looking knickknacks, stores cluttered with weapons and swords leaning against the walls, and other establishments decorated with grand sets of armor. All kinds of places you would never see on Earth.

I look toward the end of the busy street, where, despite it still being some distance away, I see an imposing castle with white towers.

As I stare at such a grand palace, a stupid look forms on my face.

I-is that really the castle where I’m headed? Won’t I feel out of place?

Even though I’d been determined to make it to the castle, now that it’s right in front of me, I can feel my resolve starting to crumble.

It almost reminds me of a famous fairy-tale castle from a certain land of dreams.

Well, I can’t stand here staring all day. Now that I’m here, I’d better get myself to the palace. I’m not sure the royal family would appreciate me keeping them waiting.

Willing myself to move, I push on toward the castle with Night and Akatsuki, but I’m so nervous I’m even more confused about my surroundings than when I first got here.

Once I eventually reach the castle gate, a soldier, presumably guarding the gate, notices me.

“Hey, you. No farther.”

“U-ummm... My name is Yuuya Tenjou. I was invited here by Owen and his soldiers.”

The soldier isn’t being intimidating at all, but I can still feel my shoulders stiffen. It’s similar to back on Earth, when you know you haven’t done anything wrong, but you still get nervous when you pass by a police officer. Actually, I think it might be exactly the same feeling.

While I think about the similarities between this world and my own, the soldier who stopped me looks surprised and stammers out a response.

“O-oh, y-you’re Yuuya! I was told about you. Please wait here for a

moment..."

The soldier runs off somewhere, but quickly returns with someone else.

"H-here he is."

"Lord Yuuya!"

"Oh! Owen! Long time no see!"

The soldier has brought none other than Owen himself to come and greet me.

"I had no idea you would come so quickly... I thought you might need some more time."

"Sorry... My schedule opened up, so I thought it would be better to come here as soon as I could... Is this a bad time?"

"Not at all! Rather, I'm grateful that you have been so considerate of us. Please follow me."

As we pass through the gate, the soldiers guarding it straighten their posture and salute us, but it feels a little awkward to me. Although Owen is probably the one they're saluting.

Once we've passed through the gate, a whole other world stands before me.

It's a world filled with seemingly impossible fountains, gardens full of trees, and blooming flowers.

In those gardens, I can see the same balls of light that I saw in the last city floating through the air in great numbers. It looks so magical.

"Woof..."

"Oink!"

Night also seems starstruck by the castle, and only Akatsuki, chest puffed out, struts behind Owen. It's pretty amazing that Akatsuki isn't the least bit intimidated by this place.

I've relaxed quite a bit as well, though, so I ask Owen something that's currently on my mind.

"By the way, Owen, where are we going?"

"Hmm? Oh, did I not tell you? We're on our way to an audience with the king."

"Sorry?"

An audience...with the king?!

"So you're telling me that I'm going to see the king right now?! I'm sorry to have to tell you this, but I don't have any formal clothes prepared or anything!"

In my hurry to get to the palace, I totally forgot about stuff like that, and now I'm stuck meeting the most important person in this kingdom in just these casual clothes that the sage left me.

Owen laughs at my look of panic.

"Ha-ha-ha. I wouldn't worry too much. I say it's an audience, but it's in an unofficial capacity. I doubt His Majesty will care much about

what clothes you're wearing."

"A-are you sure? And do you think it will be okay to keep these two with me while we talk?"

"I don't foresee any issues. Lord Night also played a hand in saving the princess after all. But..."

"Oink?"

Owen starts his next sentence, looking curiously at Akatsuki.

"Uhhh...Yuuya. Does this little piglet have a name?"

"Oh, this little guy...is called Akatsuki. He's the newest member of our family."

"Oink..."

Akatsuki casually raises his front hoof following my introduction. It's cute, but aren't you being a little too casual? Are you sure that's all right?

Owen doesn't say anything in particular about Akatsuki's wave, but he does make a face.

"I—I see... Lord Yuuya, your strange little family grows each time we meet..."

"I—I suppose you could say that."

Even though he's not family, I now know a rabbit who's both my master and my apprentice. I really do have a lot of strange acquaintances. Yet I'm still grateful for each and every one of them.

"Well, I don't think there will be a problem if Lord Akatsuki comes, too. Also, I'm not overly worried, but the one thing I ask of you in front of His Majesty is that you are not rude."

"Sure."

Oh no... *Oh no!* Not only have I forgotten to bring formal clothes, but I still don't know the etiquette here! I've never even met royalty back on Earth! Do I bow ninety degrees? Do I kneel? Which is it?!

I'm kinda worried by Owen's blind faith in me to not mess this up, but the moment I turn to him to ask what I should do, I find that we've already arrived in front of a set of grand doors.

Having been wrapped up in my own thoughts and worries all the way here, I haven't paid much attention to my surroundings until now.

Bodyguard-like soldiers line up on either side of the heavy, finely crafted doors, and as soon as we reach them, they call out to the people on the other side.

"Yuuya Tenjou has arrived!"

"Huh?!"

In the face of my surprise, the doors swing open, and Owen doesn't hesitate to pass through. All I can do is follow him. But seriously... what do I do?!

My brain is working overtime like it never has before, and I activate

my Mental Fortitude skill to help me calm down.

I can feel my field of view expanding and my consciousness turning itself to the surroundings I haven't been able to take in until now.

As I glance around the room, I see several grand pillars, and a red carpet is laid out where we will walk.

On the far side of the room is a small staircase leading up to an opulent throne, on which sits a man in the prime of his life.

A crown rests atop the man's head, and a red cloak drapes across his shoulders.

On either side of him stand men, most likely the king's bodyguards, clad in black robes.

As I continue to look around, I find Lexia and Luna standing at the bottom of the stairs.

When they see me, both of their faces light up, and Lexia waves to me eagerly. Hmm... Should I wave back, or...? No, I'm in front of the king.

Feeling much more relaxed now that I've seen Lexia and Luna, I see Owen walk out a few steps in front of me and take a knee, so I rush to do the same. Night droops his head to imitate me, but Akatsuki is still acting a bit cocky, so I quickly push him into a similar position as Night.

"Your Majesty, may I present to you, Lord Yuuya Tenjou."

"Thank you, Owen."

His response may be short, but even that drips with so much regality that I can feel my back straighten in response, even though my head is lowered. I-it's almost frightening...

Then the regal voice is turned toward to me.

"Yuuya, is it? Hold your head up, boy."

"O-okay..."

Nervously, I lift my head and meet the king's eyes.

He's a handsome man, and I can see where Lexia gets her good looks from.

"So it was you who saved Lexia, was it?"

"Y-yes."

"...And it was you who she proposed to, I presume?"

"E-excuse me?"

H-hang on. What? Why is he asking me this so suddenly? And by the looks of things, he's not in the best of moods anymore!

As I break out into a cold sweat, the glaring king eventually stands up.

"And was it you who seduced my darling daughter, you BASTAARD?!"

"Whaaa—?!"

Seduced her?! What is he talking about?!

As I kneel there, too shocked to do anything, Owen suddenly rises from his kneeling position.

“Your Majesty! This may be an unofficial meeting, but you are still holding an audience! Can you not hold your emotions back for now?!”

“How can I?!”

“You must! You are the king!”

For some reason, Owen is able to be quite blunt with him. Can you please not make this situation any more confusing? I already don’t understand what’s happening anymore.

Once their little comedic duo set ends, the king grumpily sits back down on his throne and introduces himself offhandedly.

“Hmph. I’m Arnold, the king of Arselia.”

“Ph-phew... And I’m Yuuya Tenjou. This is Night and Akatsuki.”

I introduce myself and then follow up by introducing Night and Akatsuki as well, yet the king—Arnold—still looks very unhappy.

...I guess if I thought that my cute daughter had taken up with some asshole, I wouldn’t be dancing on the ceiling about it, either, but it’s not like *I* asked *her* to marry me, so isn’t this all a bit much? I’m going to end up crying at this rate.

I’m already a bag of nerves, when, after listening to my introduction, King Arnold slowly holds out his hand.

“Here.”

“Huh?”

When I cock my head and show that I don’t know what he means, King Arnold furrows his brow.

“Are you telling me that you don’t know what I’m asking of you? Or have you just come all the way here without a single gift for my daughter?”

“Your Majesty! You are being unreasonable! Lord Yuuya saved your daughter’s life!”

“That’s right, Father! So why are you taking such an attitude?!”

As I kneel there, astonished at the king’s actions, both Owen and Lexia try to stick up for me.

But...still, it’s true. I was the one who came here all of a sudden, so it’s weird that I wouldn’t even think of bringing something for the princess, right...?

All I ever think about is myself. That’s why I forgot. I have to be more careful about these kinds of things.

While I reflect on my lack of formal clothes, my lack of etiquette, and my lack of a gift for Lexia, I see that Owen and the others are still defending me to the king. Even though this is all my fault. I feel so sorry.

I wonder if there’s anything I have on me that I can give her...

As I desperately think through all the stuff I have in my Item Box, I

remember something that I picked up on my way here.

Seeing as I acquired so many on the road, there shouldn't be any problem giving one of these to Lexia. Plus, if I give her this, he shouldn't be angry with me...should he...?

"U-um!"

"What?"

When I address King Arnold, who is still arguing with the others, he turns to me disdainfully.

"I, uh... I honestly don't know if this is any good, but may I offer this gift to Princess Lexia...?" I say, and remove an item from the Item Box—it's a Futon of Supreme Bliss.

With the effects that this futon has, anyone should be happy to receive it as a gift. It guarantees a good night's sleep!

I guess usually it's better to present something like weapons to the royal family, but in this case, I think drawing a weapon could be taken the wrong way. Plus, it's for Lexia. She probably wouldn't know what to do with a weapon, but I don't have to worry about that with this.

As I retrieve the futon, for some reason, King Arnold looks at me in shock.

"Y-you have an Item Box?!"

Huh, so even he's surprised by my Item Box. I realized it was a rare skill back at the merchant guild, but I had to get a Futon of Supreme Bliss out of mine, so people are going to see it anyway. If I want to keep it hidden, I'll have to think of a way to do that.

After I take out a Futon of Supreme Bliss, one of the soldiers takes it from me and delivers it to Lexia.

"What is that...? Don't tell me! He gave you a futon? A futon?!"

The king watches the futon get passed to Lexia with wide eyes, obviously still riled up, then catches sight of Lexia's face.

For some reason, Lexia's cheeks have turned slightly pink.

"This Yuuya! How dare he!!"

I tilt my head again, still unable to understand what he means. King Arnold is bright red and screaming.

"You BASTAAARD! You try to seduce my own daughter right in front of my very eyes!"

"What are you talking about?!"

Seduction?! What does he even mean by that?!

"You dare feign ignorance...?! I've had enough! Get this scoundrel out of my sight!"

He's throwing me out?! Even though he was the one who invited me to come all this way?!



I have no idea what to do next. Owen just slaps a hand to his forehead and groans.

“Your Majesty... We’re completely forgetting to take into account the fact that Lord Yuuya is not from this land. Is it not outside the realm of possibility that he simply does not understand our customs...?”

“C-customs?”

I can feel the color draining from my face. That word does not bode well. That’s when Owen turns to me with a troubled look.

“Lord Yuuya, in this country, giving bedding to a member of the opposite sex indicates that you want to marry them. It means that you want to share the same bed as them.”

“What?”

“In other words, giving Her Highness bedding as a gift means that you have just extended such an offer. If your gift had been anything else...”

N-now I’ve gone and done it!

How am I supposed to know about stuff like that?! S-so that means I just propositioned King Arnold’s daughter right in front of him!

As my mind goes blank with the realization of what I have just done setting in, King Arnold takes his sword from a robed man standing at attention nearby.

“I’ve heard enough... If you will not leave, then you shall stay here forever as your blood turns to rust on the blade of Grackle...!”

“Calm down, Your Majesty! Lord Yuuya simply does not understand our ways!”

“I will not hear another word!”

“You must calm down! Why did you soldiers give him the sword?!”

Owen is desperately trying to hold back the king, who is swinging for me while I simply stand there in a daze. All of a sudden, Night, who until this point had kept his head bowed as if to say none of this was to do with him, jumps up.

He’s staring at the ceiling and growling.

“Grrr...”

“Huh? Night, what is it?”

Night’s sudden growl takes me by surprise, but when I look in the same direction—

“Your Majesty!”

“What the—?! ”

All of a sudden, figures dressed in black drop from the ceiling.

“Wh—who are these people?!”

“Your Majesty! Get behind me!”

“Lexia, stay close.”

Owen and the wizard guards step in front of King Arnold to protect him, while Luna moves to defend Lexia.

“Who do you think you are?!”

“There’s no need for a man about to die to know.”

The man in black who replied so icily to King Arnold’s question appears to be ruffling around in his breast pocket, from which he pulls out a mysterious crystal.

“You! Guards! Stop him from moving!”

“Gah! Fire Arrow!”

The robed wizards conjure fire arrows and fire them all at once in an attempt to stop the man in black. That’s when the crystal in his hand glitters.

“Anti-Magic Field.”

“Argh—!”

The flaming arrows soaring toward the man vanish in an instant.

“How unfortunate. Now no one will be able to interfere. Nor will anyone be able to use magic.”

“Normally, we would have to be careful of both Owen and the palace wizards over there who protect you, but if we seal their magic, then Owen is the only obstacle left standing in our way.”

I’ve already had enough of this damn audience, but now that these guys are attacking for some reason, it feels like my head is going to explode. Can things just slow down already?

“Now, Arnold, Lexia. You shall both die here today...!”

All of the men in black lunge for King Arnold.

For the moment, Owen and Luna are managing to hold them off somehow, but with such a difference in numbers and some talent within the ranks of the men in black, even they are struggling to put up a fight.

The robed wizards are trying over and over to activate their magic, but just as they were told, it looks like they won’t be able to wield it again anytime soon. And now that we’re sealed off, even if we wait, there will be no reinforcements coming to the rescue.

Hmm... So far, the men have left me alone, but things don’t look good, do they...?

I turn to Night and Akatsuki and bark some orders.

“Night, you’re with me. We’re going to go and immobilize the guys in black. Akatsuki...it doesn’t look like you can use any magic here, but Holy Sanctuary is a skill, so that might be okay. Can you heal anyone you find who’s injured?”

“Woof!”

“Oink!”

Both of them respond enthusiastically, and I break into a smile.

“All right, then... Let’s go!”

I make use of the leg strength that the rabbit gave me and close in on the black-clad man closest to me.

“Agh?!”

Shocked by the sight of me already up in his face, the man squeals. I ignore him and, mindful of everything the rabbit taught me, kick him in the torso, trying with all my might to not deliver a lethal blow.

“Gaaaah!”

The man I kicked flies through the air, taking out a few of his friends with him, before smacking into a wall and losing consciousness.

After I suddenly knock out a number of them at the same time with my attack, everyone, including Owen and the others, stares in my direction.

If I can't use magic, then I won't.

That said, I'm more used to battling without magic, so this type of fight is easier for me.

I focus on making flames in the palm of my hand, just to see what might happen...but there they are.

“Huh?! How can you use magic?!”

The man who seems to be the leader of the assailants shouts out when he sees me conjure the flames, but I don't know why they've appeared, either. All I did was check on the off chance that I could use magic... Maybe it's because of the sage's special mana pathways. They did belong to the man who was asked to become a god after all...

Still, it looks like no one else apart from me can use it. If I use it inside, though, I could cause a fire or flood the entire room. That would be a real mess to clean up.

I could probably use my Omnisword and other weapons without any problems, but then if I start clumsily swinging them around, just like how I wield my magic, I could damage the room and leave it even worse. This time I should stick with kicks. I've only ever used the techniques the rabbit taught me on monsters, so it'll be useful to have some humans to practice on for once.

As the men clad in black stand there staring, Night and I get to work, taking them all down one by one with kick after kick until they're all out cold.

“Way to go, Sir Yuuya! You kicked their butts!”

“Yuuya, have you gotten stronger? I—I guess that strength is always saving me, huh...?”

Lexia and Luna both say something as they watch me fight, but I'm too caught up in the action to hear anything properly. If I think about it, for a princess, Lexia has been amazingly calm during all of this.

“You... Who are you...?!” the man with the crystal asks, looking at me, as the sole attacker left standing. I ignore him and unleash a final

kick.

The man hits the wall. I check to make sure that he's unconscious and then look around the room again.

Night has taken out quite a few of them, but Akatsuki doesn't appear to have done much, so it looks like there were few injuries. Good.

Feeling reassured, I ask the astonished-looking King Arnold a question.

"So...what should we do with all of them?"

"Oh! Owen! Please tie these men up nice and tight!"

"Yes, Your Majesty!"

Following the king's instruction, Owen and the guards go around and tie up all the men.

As they do, Owen pulls down the hoods of the men and searches their belongings, until he finds something in particular and freezes.

"Th-this is..."

"What is it, Owen? Have you found something?"

"...Yes. This man bears...Prince Reigar's coat of arms..."

"What did you just say?!"

King Arnold, overcome with shock, slumps weakly into his throne and issues a single command.

"...Throw these men into the cells and keep them under strict supervision... I'm sorry, but I must retire to my room."

"...Yes, Your Majesty."

King Arnold shakily stands and leads his men out of the room.

New soldiers take their place and lead the bound attackers away at Owen's instruction.

Having lent a hand without really understanding what was going on, Night, Akatsuki, and I look around the room, trying to make sense of what just happened, when Owen approaches with a grim look on his face.

"I'm sorry, Lord Yuuya."

"Why?"

"It pains me to have to ask after you came all this way, but the kingdom is in trouble... Lord Yuuya, for the sake of this city—no, for the sake of this kingdom, will you lend us your strength?"

"What?!"

With no clue about what's happening, I find myself dragged into the kingdom's mess.

Afterword

Thank you very much for picking up the next volume of this series.

This is Miku, the author.

It's been a while now since I moved to Tokyo, but I've now taken the rite of passage of traveling on a packed train, and every time I do it, I suffer. I can't help but wish that I had teleportation magic like Yuuya does.

As for this volume of the series, Yuuya has now welcomed Akatsuki into his family, and we as readers have met the rabbit, Yuuya's new master-slash-apprentice.

I've always been allergic to cats and dogs, so having a family full of animals is something I always wished I could have.

After moving to Tokyo, I decided to get retested for those allergies, and I am delighted to announce that my allergies to my beloved soba, dogs, and cats have finally disappeared!

I can't raise any pets where I live right now, but when I think about how that means my family can welcome cats and dogs back in my hometown, that makes me very happy.

After acquiring so many skills and items, Yuuya has also acquired a new master in the form of the rabbit.

Until now, Yuuya has been teaching himself how to fight, but with a proper master by his side, he'll definitely be getting even stronger.

At the same time, we also discover the existence of some incredibly powerful forces in the other world—the Deities and Demons. And now with the addition of monsters above S-class, a whole new side of that world has opened up for Yuuya.

Now that he is cultivating more relationships there besides Lexia and Luna, he's starting to make his presence known.

Back on Earth, Yuuya has refused the talent agency's offer to become a celebrity, but as he gets entangled within the ulterior motives of those who can't accept his decision, it's becoming impossible to predict what's going to happen to him in the future.

I'm really happy if you're sitting there reading this, trying to figure out how Yuuya is will end up.

On the lighter side, I was able to include a few things in this volume that I really wanted to try writing about, like more of the daily necessity series of items that I wish existed in real life and the selling of stuff from Earth in the other world for big bucks, so I hope you enjoyed those additions.

There are also a few people I would like to thank:

First, I'd like to thank my editors for putting up with all the meetings and all the trouble I caused to help make this book even better.

Second, I'd like to thank Rein Kuwashima for not only the cool and beautiful illustrations of my human characters, but for the adorable artwork for the animal characters like Night and Akatsuki as well.

Lastly, to my readers on *Kakuyomu* for giving this series a chance and reading my books.

I thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

See you next time.

Miku

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by Yen On.**

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